Boy Drinks Ink

EYES WIDE SHUT: HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

An In-Depth Analysis of Stanley Kubrick's Misunderstood Masterpi

Mask on the pillow—one of the most enduring images in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image vi cinémamoderne.com/Warner Bros. (2019)*

PROLOGUE: AUTHOR'S NOTES

Eyes Wide Shut, more than any other movie, gave rise to my interest in cinema as a compell storytelling medium. I've been haunted by the film since I first saw it upon its 1999 release,

studied it in an attempt to understand it. So, this article is my contribution to the ongoing
Kubrick film analyses swirling around out there.

To avoid rehashing what's already been extensively discussed by others, I've focused prima
own observations and interpretations—although much research was required to understan
film's many facets. Written purely for my own interest and not for profit, I've excluded som
with the intention of maybe expanding it all into a book one day. But I wanted to put out wh
so far—which is still quite thorough—in time for *Eyes Wide Shut*'s 20-year anniversary.

This analysis is for people who like to think deeply about works of art—movies, music, liter
and draw comparisons to our own real world so that we may evolve to navigate through it v
greater wisdom and understanding. It's been an education working on this essay, because a
see, the movie's reach goes far and wide. Watching *Eyes Wide Shut* has opened my mind and
writing about it has opened them even more.

Nik Dobrinsky / Boy Drinks Ink
July 16th, 2019

AUTHOR'S NOTES ON 2024 REVISIONS

It's been five years since I first published this article in 2019, when I had rushed to get it fin
the 20th anniversary of *Eyes Wide Shut*'s release date. While I was largely satisfied with it at
there were still some things bothering me. So I've taken this opportunity of the film's *25th*
anniversary to add a few last thoughts.

Substantial new segments include a look at the film's links to visual art and artists (in the s
CARLOTTA & GISELLE), a discussion about antisemitism and conspiracy theories (in STAN
KUBRICK IS IN THE MOVIE), and more description of connections between objects, charac
dialogue (in PERIPHERALITY & PARALLELISM). I also added a few citations, corrected som
technical errors, and incorporated additional references to cinema, music, and literature,
relevant.

Some of my observations will no doubt go too far for some readers, and not far enough for
But here they are. Now twenty-five years after it debuted, I can finally lay my obsession wit
Wide Shut to rest.

Nik Dobrinsky / Boy Drinks Ink
July 16th, 2024

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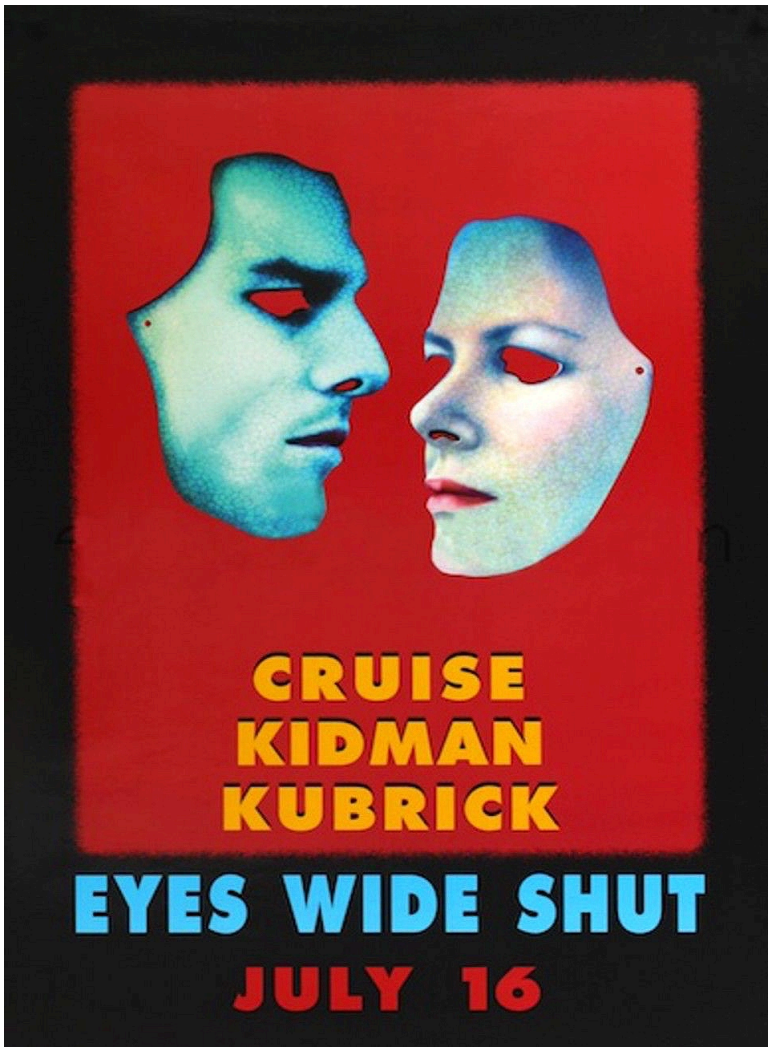


Eyes Wide Shut promotional poster (1999)

INTRODUCTION: A MISUNDERSTOOD MASTERPIECE

Eyes Wide Shut is the last work of legendary movie director Stanley Kubrick, and like many films it contains layers of meaning not easily deciphered or understood on first viewing. Re 1999 to mixed responses, *Eyes Wide Shut* has since garnered considerable interest and has c regarded as one of Kubrick's finest works. A few days after completing the final cut, Kubric heart attack at age seventy at his home near London, England.

Early reviews described *Eyes Wide Shut* as an "erotic thriller" and "sexual odyssey", using wo "Freudian", "dreams", "fantasy", and "guilt". Sex is indeed a major subject in the film, but just significant are references to class, capitalism, the world's ruling elite, and powerful secret And not always as immediately apparent are seemingly endless allusions that extend acros of literature, music, opera, ballet, theatre, mythology, religion, politics, history, etymology, visual art, and even Kubrick's own personal life. There's a very odd quality of transtextualit film wherein close examination of virtually any aspect is like entering a rabbit hole into a n cryptic symbolism, bizarre linkages, and cross-references to other elements within the filn

works of art, and real life. Countless details initially pass unnoticed, only for deeper conte to unveil profoundly resonant interconnectedness.

Many regard Kubrick as the greatest filmmaker of all time. Reputably obsessive and meticu oversaw—with painstaking attention to detail—*every* aspect of his films. A perfectionist and workaholic, he commanded total control of his movies down to the selection of books on sh appearing onscreen in the background. We're looking at the foreground, but there's lots on outskirts that we don't know we're seeing because we don't understand it, unless we have t knowledge. Things in our peripheral vision are in fact—as I'll show in this essay—incredibly to the themes presented in the forefront, functioning as meta-commentary on the film itse Numerous details in *Eyes Wide Shut* connect to the real world in strange and surprising wa curious examples of how far Kubrick's vision reached, whether conscious or subconscious part.

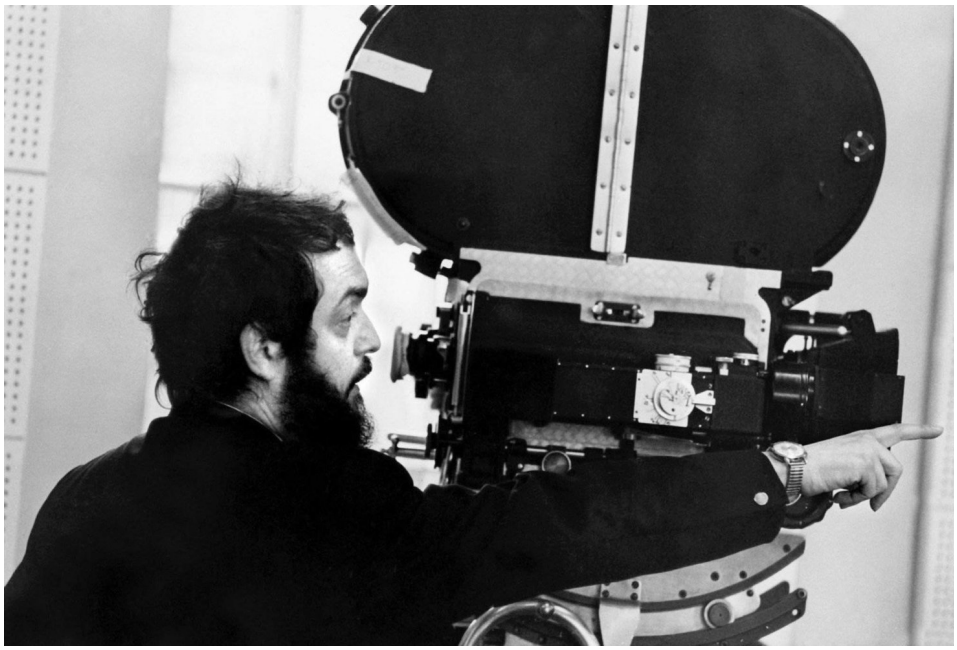
Stanley Kubrick, photographed by Dmitri Kasterine in 1970 on the set of *A Clockwork Orange* - *Image via* ***bfi.org.uk*** *(2019)*

Kubrick was often accused of favouring technical precision and lofty intellectualism to the of emotional impact. Indeed, his films generally aren't for those who seek light entertainm a cerebral temperament. Many of his movies have a cold, clinical quality and seem, at least

surface, to espouse a thoroughly pessimistic view of humanity. His technical innovation in of cinema is unparalleled, as each of his works has an aural and visual sharpness, an exacti camerawork, framing, lighting, positioning, special effects, music, and so on. One thing is Kubrick films always look and sound amazing. The stories, however, are often controversia polarized reactions. The ways his narratives unfold subvert cinematic storytelling conventi bold, grandiose strokes that are sometimes so extreme as to leave audiences perplexed or i Kubrick films are challenging because he tells stories in ways we're unaccustomed to recei to peculiar and often unsettling effect.

Although his movies sometimes have a brash and brassy quality, Kubrick was actually a ma narrative subtlety—methodically calculating the most minute detail. He was a creative geni came to carefully constructed ambiguity, which is why his films are so often subject to cont different viewers see different things in them. As a result, Kubrick films were often misund receiving mixed or outright negative critical reviews upon release. Over time, however—so *decades*—many of his movies that initially received less than favourable reviews eventually Best Films of All Time lists.

Stanley Kubrick was, among other things, a satirist. A harsh, unapologetic one. This is profo clear with his movies *Lolita* (1962), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)—thr most celebrated works, and all three black comedies (about pedophilia, nuclear war, and vi crime, respectively). It's generally agreed upon that *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) is his numb is it satire too, of science fiction? It definitely reinvented the genre in ambitious fashion. *Pa Glory* (1957) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) are less obviously satire than they are *anti*war films. *of Glory* is an ironic title given that the film condemns war's gross irrationality, courageous *deglamorizing* depictions of glorified war victory so common in American cinema. And a cas be made for *The Shining* (1980) as a sendup of slasher-horror films, a commentary on violer against women and the murderous madness of colonial patriarchy. Kubrick liked pushing t boundaries, and overamplification and exaggeration are elements of satire.



Stanley Kubrick, the film director in action - *Image via* ***premiumbeat.com*** *(2019)*

So, is *Eyes Wide Shut* satire? Of pornographic film, of sex and power in Hollywood? An iron the Erotic Thriller genre, Murder Mystery, or Film Noir? It stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kid married couple, who *were* a married couple in real life, both major Hollywood celebrities, a symbols—a case of brilliant metacinematic casting. And they were well-known Scientologis enhances the film's commentary on wealthy power organizations. In an interview at the tin said he didn't think he and Kidman would've been able to handle being in the movie if they the early part of their marriage because of the intense issues around sex and monogamy th addresses. But they broke up a year after *Eyes Wide Shut* debuted, and divorced shortly ther maybe they couldn't handle it anyway, and perhaps their time spent working on the film, ar marital issues it examines, was a factor in their separation. Kidman reportedly left Scientol leaving Cruise, but he remains a loyal advocate. Looking through the lens of satire, some K films register more overtly so, some more subtly. And when more subtly, as in *Eyes Wide Sh* viewers are perhaps less clear on the message or intent.

I myself have often finished watching a Kubrick film for the first time and felt confused or as an audience member, an unknowing participant in an inside joke between Kubrick and h few Kubrick films I liked immediately, but others confounded me. My knee-jerk response w to want to write him off as heavy handed, pretentious, and self-important. But something a movie was incredibly compelling. I've been increasingly baffled since I first saw *Eyes Wide S* theatre in 1999, initially liking it but also kind of bothered by it. Something about it rubbed wrong way, but I couldn't identify exactly what it was—and *that* was compelling in and of its over the last twenty years I've been drawn back to watch *Eyes Wide Shut* again and again, st in an attempt to figure it out. And each new trajectory of exploration reveals increasingly c details and unexpected layers of meaning...to mind-blowing degrees.

Stanley Kubrick was a lifelong chess player, reportedly playing the game virtually daily sinc childhood. Watching *Eyes Wide Shut* indeed feels like witnessing a series of strategic orches within an Escheresque chessboard dream labyrinth. The film is extraordinary in the almos inconceivable interconnectivity within its broad scope of themes, subjects, symbols, and al One thing I've concluded about *Eyes Wide Shut* is that I'm not sure we're supposed to fully understand it. The impossibility of the title says it. The overwhelming contradictions inher humankind. Among other things, it's a *Dream Story*. And how well do we really understand dreams?

Stanley Kubrick operating the camera on the 1997-1998 set of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via the conversation.com (2024)*

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HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: YOU'RE NOT EVEN LOOKING AT IT

Stanley Kubrick began his career behind the camera as a still photographer for *Look*, a pho magazine in New York City, which makes sense given the emphasis on *image* that comes thr his films. Viewing Kubrick movies with this in mind—Stanley as the photographer—reveals considered the medium a visual/sensory experience foremost, and why his movies, even if sure about the story, always *look* so good.

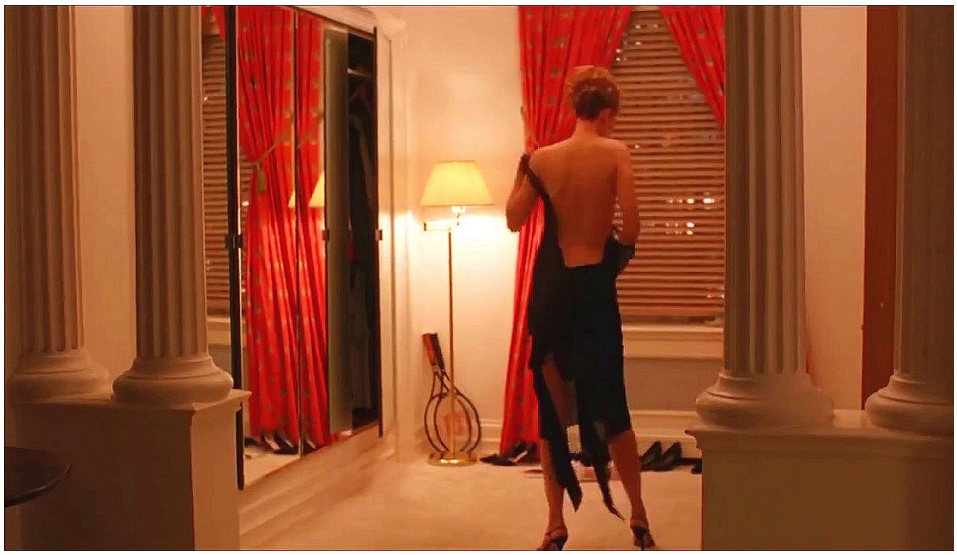
Kubrick made numerous statements in interviews over the years that provide immeasurab into how we might regard his films. In 1968, when asked to comment on the metaphysical significance of *2001*, he replied: "It's not a message I ever intended to convey in words...I tri create a visual experience, one that bypasses verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrat subconscious with an emotional and philosophic content" ("The Playboy Interview", 1968). W interviewed by biographer Michel Ciment in 1980 (printed in full in Ciment's book *Kubrick*) made a statement that applies perfectly to *Eyes Wide Shut*: "Realism is probably the best wa dramatize argument and ideas. *Fantasy* may deal best with themes which lie primarily in th unconscious" (Ciment, 181).

In *Stanley Kubrick: The Complete Films*, Paul Duncan discusses the interpretive quality of K pictures, stating "he was very careful not to present his own views of the meaning of his filr leave them open to interpretation" (Duncan, 10). Kubrick commented on this early in his ca

> One of the things I always find extremely difficult, when a picture's finished, is when a writer or a film reviewer asks, "Now, what is it that you were trying to say in that picture?" And without being thought too presumptuous for using this analogy, I like to remember what T.S. Eliot said to someone who had asked him—I believe it was *The Waste Land*—what he meant by the poem. He replied, "I meant what I said." If I could have said it any differently, I would have. ("The Odyssey Begins", 1960 *Horizon* interview)

The phrase "hidden in plain sight" applies to Kubrick's filmmaking methodology in which e onscreen is purposefully chosen, even if the audience doesn't notice or understand the rele The saying is almost a synonym for "eyes wide shut"—a contradiction in terms suggesting s about perception filters of the mind, denial vs. awareness, conscious vs. subconscious vs. unconscious processes. Kubrick doesn't tell you where to look or what to think, which mak and think. It's this unique quality of objectivity that makes for a wide range of interpretatio *Wide Shut* an indictment of capitalism? It certainly doesn't seem to be endorsing it. Is it mi chauvinistic, bourgeois, and pretentious? Or is it condemning misogyny, chauvinism, mate and pretentiousness?

Perhaps *Eyes Wide Shut* is many things at once; a disturbing satire, scathing indictment of t grotesquely wealthy and those with sleazy bourgeois values who seek to be like them, a fant *and* a sincere, thoughtful study of marriage, sex, and class, how these subjects relate to hu perception and emotion, and the often unseen or imagined forces that drive us all. *Eyes Wi* not just a stylized marital drama, but also an alternative Love Story, as much as an alternat Christmas Movie, as much as a Dream Movie. And Stanley Kubrick was perhaps the world's successful maker of mainstream art films. He found a way—like few before him or since—t interpretive movies that are commercially successful in popular culture while simultaneou appealing to cult film audiences, intellectuals and academics, cinephiles, critics, artists, an filmmakers.



The opening shot of *Eyes Wide Shut* contains elements that feature prominently throughout the movie: mirrors, windows, lights, and women (1999)

Amidst an onslaught of negative early reviews, essayist Tim Kreider gave a favourable, deta critique of *Eyes Wide Shut* with his article ***Introducing Sociology***. Kreider wrote that the film poor reception was "generally blamed on a miscalculated ad campaign". It was promoted as about sex, featuring two of the era's biggest sex symbols and movie stars in the world—Ton as Bill Harford and Nicole Kidman as Alice Harford, a real-life married couple playing an o married couple—and therefore people expected the movie to be *sexy*. But Kubrick mocks th preconception from the very first shot, showing Alice as she "shrugs off her dress and kicks Kubrick gives the audience a few seconds of what many came to see the film for, "a big-tim star naked", as if to get it out of the way in order to move on to the serious stuff. Then the s to black and the paradoxical main title appears, "telling us that we're not really seeing what staring at. In other words, *Eyes Wide Shut* is not going to be about sex" (Kreider, *Introducing*

But *Eyes Wide Shut* is very much about sex. So, what I take from Kreider's point is that it's ju *only* about sex—it's also about capitalism, psychology, communication, and so much more. and co-screenwriter Frederic Raphael adapted *Eyes Wide Shut* from a 1926 novella by Austr Arthur Schnitzler; the original German title of this source material is *Traumnovelle*, which as *Dream Story*. So, maybe *Eyes Wide Shut* is more about dreams.

The movie in fact touches on many works of art, genres, and subjects that span thousands including: the ancient myths *Helen of Troy* and *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, Beethoven's op *Fidelio*, the 19th-century ballet *Giselle*, John Milton's 17th-century masque *Comus*, and class children's fantasy stories such as L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, Dr. Seuss's *How the Gri Christmas*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. There ar unexpected connections to Kubrick's own films, and to a diverse range of other movies, su Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Woody Allen's *Manhattan* (1979), Paul Mazursky's *I Love* (1973), and Hans Richter's *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1947).

And there are stunning metacinematic elements wherein real-life details surrounding Stan Kubrick, his family, and others associated with *Eyes Wide Shut* are riddled throughout the r interconnected in often uncanny ways. Which connections were consciously orchestrated b versus which are coincidental is the subject of ongoing debate, but ultimately inconsequen see what *we* see. Some linkages are more obviously meaningful, and others more nuanced a supplemental. But because of Kubrick's well-documented obsessiveness about every aspec movies, it can be assumed that little to nothing that appears in *Eyes Wide Shut* is happensta

Eyes Wide Shut promotional poster (1999)

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MISE-EN-SCÈNE / MISE-EN-ABYME

Mise-en-scène is a French cinematic term, meaning "placing on stage", and refers in film pr to everything that appears before the camera; the selection and arrangement of every visib within the frame, the placement and movement of the objects and actors, the set design, c etc. Kubrick was an unparalleled master of mise-en-scène, with an acute sense of framing positioning.

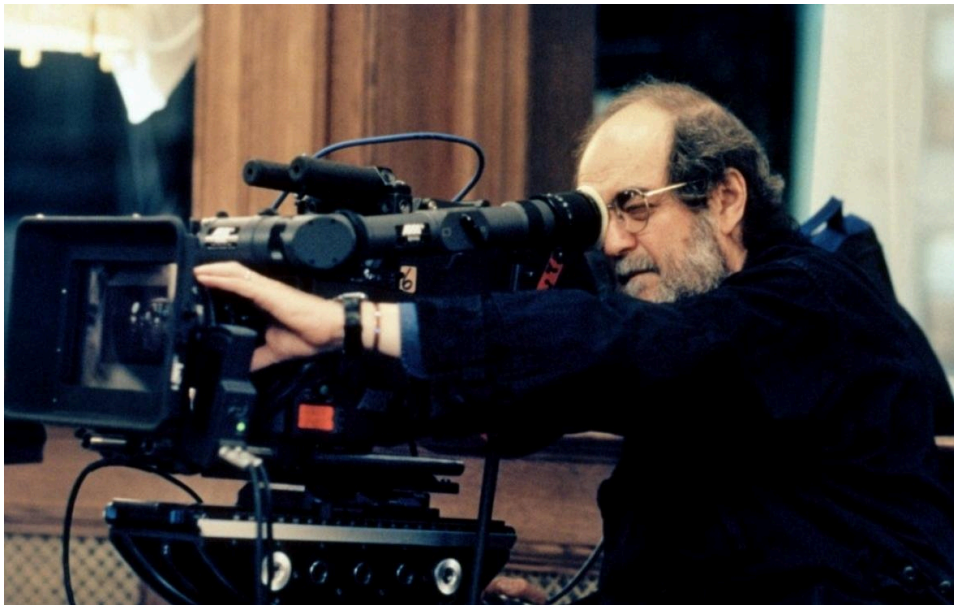
While some footage was shot in real locations in New York and England, much of what is su be 1999 New York City was constructed on soundstages in London, UK. Examining the mise in *Eyes Wide Shut* reaffirms Kubrick's understanding of the art of cinema as a visual storyte form, not only with the placement of objects but the *selection* of them; book titles on shelve on buildings, pictures on walls, and movies that play, within the movie, on television scree background—all prove to be profoundly relevant.

Conversely to mise-en-scène is the art term *mise-en-abyme*, meaning "placing into abyss". a technique of placing a copy of an image within itself and/or of inserting a story within a s abyss is a deep or bottomless chasm that in mythology leads to an underworld—and the ph

en-abyme is described as capturing the visual experience of standing between two mirrors suggesting an infinitely recurring image or sequence. The term derived from heraldry and called the *Droste Effect*, in which a picture appears within itself. Mise-en-abyme can likewi in film, literature, and other media, resulting in a recursive, reflexive, and/or metafictional involving details within the work mirroring each other and sometimes referring to the mec itself.

This mise-en-scène/mise-en-abyme, house-of-mirrors scheme reverberates throughout *E Shut* with its time structure in relation to story events, duality and mirroring themes, the contradiction in the title, metacinematic elements, and real-life Kubrick associations. The involves the main character's descent into an "abyss" of sorts, with seemingly endlessly mea symbols, images, objects in every frame.

What results is a kind of artistic Rubik's Cube—a Kubrick's Cube—or more accurately, Kubr Parallelepiped or something. A many-sided, prismatic tesseract of multidimensional mean phosphenic crossword puzzle, strange loop of interconnectivity that transcends across nur frequencies in a complex narrative web. A work of art.



Stanley Kubrick—with one eye wide and one eye shut—operating the camera on the 1997-1998 se of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* Indie Wire *(2024)*

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META-DIALOGUE: COMMUNICATION & UNDERSTANDING

The story starts in earnest with the first line of dialogue, spoken by protagonist Bill Harford have you seen my wallet?" This establishes what will become a recurring theme; Bill as the

A comfortably wealthy medical doctor though *not* a member of the elite ultrawealthy class, fancies himself capable of buying his way into anything. But as we discover throughout the a mere midlevel servant to this powerful upper class, who has himself already been bought *Eyes Wide Shut*'s primary themes is that the ultrarich treat everything, even people, as com And those who aren't members of the wealthiest elite often strive, in whatever unconscious join this same ruling class that exerts power over them. So Bill speaking this line to Alice, w the next room tells him exactly where his wallet is, also sets up *her* role in the film as "the w prostitute" (Kreider, *Introducing*). Alice uses her appearance and sexuality to buy in, and Bil money—but neither one of them can ever really join the club.

Eyes Wide Shut (hereafter, *EWS*) utilizes dialogue in unusual ways. Bill frequently parrots li spoken by other characters; sometimes as a question, as if unsure of what he's hearing. Do "Would you like to come inside with me?" and Bill repeats, "Come inside with you", as if revi what she's just said. At the end of their encounter Domino asks, "Do you have to go?" Bill re I have to go?" Victor says, "It's heroin and coke", and Bill responds, "Heroin and coke". And S "She may not even be coming back", which Bill echoes word for word. This dialogue device continually reiterates Bill's uncertainty about what he's experiencing, and reinforces the fil mirroring qualities.

The dialogue also includes unexpected links to other creative works. Sandor Szavost (Sky d says to Alice: "Don't you think one of the charms of marriage is that it makes deception a ne for both parties?" *Both parties* applies not only to two spouses, but to the *two parties* in the Ziegler's and the masked ball. This line is taken from Oscar Wilde's 1890 novel *The Picture o Gray*: "The one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary f parties." *EWS* also features dialogue lifted from James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), starring Schwarzenegger as a spy who conceals his true identity from his wife. At the film's outset h with a woman—like Szavost and Alice dance—at a party not dissimilar to Ziegler's. Discussi century-B.C. sculptures, the woman asks, "You like the period?" to which Schwarzenegger r "Oh, I *adore* it." In *EWS*, Szavost asks Alice "Do you like the period?" referring to Ziegler's co Renaissance bronzes, and then says, "I adore it". The paradoxically titled *True Lies* and *Eyes* both involve marital dishonesty, but otherwise have little in common, so it's peculiar that K makes this connection.

Some have criticized *EWS*'s dialogue as flat and unrealistic, but this is no doubt intentional Kubrick's part. The slow, measured manner in which the characters often speak—especially Alice—contributes to the dream atmosphere, giving us the time to observe the surrounding symbolic meaning abounds, and the space to contemplate how virtually every line resonate multiple levels. A lot of the dialogue functions as not only character communication within but also as commentary on the film itself. Kubrick's characters themselves are very much a his mise-en-scène—mechanisms of his "visual experience"—in the deliberate way they mov talk; they're not just speaking to each other but to the audience directly, about the movie.

Tom Cruise as Dr. Bill Harford & Nicole Kidman as Alice Harford in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via Jot Down (2019)*

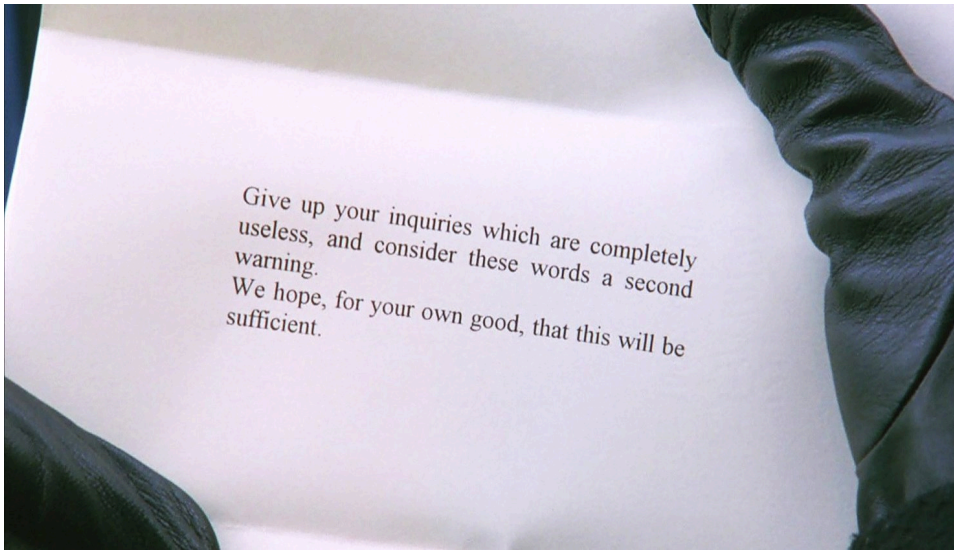
For example, one of the first lines spoken by Alice, as she and Bill are in their apartment ge ready to go to their "friend" Victor Ziegler's party, is "You're not even looking at it." In one r is simply her reaction to her husband's lack of attention when she asks him how her hair lo looking at himself in a mirror in that moment), but it also speaks to the characters' blindne capitalist influence in their lives, and some critical naysayers' blindness to the deeper mea the film itself; as *Eyes Wide Shut*—arguably the greatest title in the history of cinema—also

Ziegler, in his final confrontation with Bill, says, "Suppose I said that all of that was staged." the film, the line refers to events at the mansion's masquerade party. But it also applies to t multilayered fabric; how the very surface appearance is indeed meticulously staged to be t of attention, as a sort of misdirection from the film's deeper issues and thus mirroring the misdirection orchestrated over people by the ruling class, corporate superpowers, and gov agencies—and by Kubrick over his audience.

Another example of how dialogue is used in this way is when Bill says to the prostitute Don (Vinessa Shaw), "So, do you, do you suppose we should talk about...money?" Again, on the su line is about their impending sexual transaction, but it's also a prompt for what we, the aud should be talking about as one of the film's main topics: money. Throughout Bill's misadve spends large amounts of cash without scarcely batting an eye, offering up hundreds of doll prostitute, a cab driver, and a costume store owner. His name, after all, is "Doctor *Bill*"—a p "dollar *bill*" as a form of currency, or a "bill" as a receipt of a financial transaction—as if he h just another instrument of the wealthy elite.

Then Bill asks Domino—again ostensibly about their sexual transaction—"What do you have She answers, "I'd rather not put it into words." These lines function as further commentary film itself, and how Kubrick thought movie-watching should be foremost a visual experien bypasses verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious". Kubrick is aga us to think differently, to open ourselves to receiving this film (and all his films) in ways we unaccustomed to. In this way the movie might be regarded as being all about communicati between Bill and Alice, between Bill and himself, and between Kubrick and the audience. O phone to Alice, Bill says, "It's a little difficult to talk right now." Then near the end of the sto

Bill sees the mask on the pillow and Alice wakes up, he says, "I'll tell you everything." But it the next morning and we don't actually hear what he tells her.



Bill receives a threatening letter from the folks at the mansion in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* **imdb.com** *(2019)*

There is in fact considerable attention given to different communication forms in *EWS*; hov mediums by which we broadcast our messages function in relation to understanding. Wher understand something we say, "Oh, I *see*." There's seeing with the eyes, and seeing with the movie is a medium of communication, and the title *Eyes Wide Shut* applies as much to the protagonist Bill Harford as it does to us, the viewers, and our limited ability to comprehenc world's vast, often contradictory complexities as reflected in this film. So, in addition to di there are many other means of communication in *EWS*; written notes on paper, paintings a on walls, movies playing on television screens, and telephone calls.

On Bill's nighttime streetwalk, he passes a man on a payphone who says, "Oh, I *see*, I'm taki it baby." Alice calls Bill on his cellphone when he's at Domino's. Bill calls Marion from his of to hang up when Carl answers. Nick Nightingale receives a call from the mansion folk while with Bill at the Sonata Café. Bill receives a call from Ziegler's people when he's at the hospi immediately after Alice's revelation about her sexual fantasy with another man, Bill gets a p at home, ostensibly to inform him that a patient has just died. He hangs up and says, "I thin go over there and show my face." He's staring off into space as he utters the line, as if sayin himself more than Alice. This begins Bill's odyssey, and later that night he ends up at the m party where he's exposed as an impostor, told to remove his mask, and *show his face*. So, wh speaks the line to Alice, Bill has already entered his own internal dream reality, and is not j talking about paying a professional visit to his client, but rather about going to the dark sid who he really is.

There are also numerous instances of written messages on paper being passed around: Nic the mansion password "Fidelio" on a paper napkin at the Sonata. Bill flashes around his me license card every chance he gets. Bill buys a newspaper and sits in a coffee shop to read it shows a torn-out article from it to Ziegler. And when Bill revisits the mansion, the gatemar him a threatening letter which in part reads, "Give up your inquiries, which are entirely use plays as another metacinematic comment about *EWS* itself—as if Kubrick knew the film wo

in countless obsessive analyses, and is telling the viewer to "give up trying to figure out or s movie" and just enjoy the ride.

Multifunctional dialogue, phone calls, notes...it all feels like a series of muffled, muted atte communication. But it's hazy and isn't quite connecting, because it's all about Bill, and he's honest. Communication is, experts say, the number one requirement for a healthy relation

Cruise & Kidman in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

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SKULL & BONES, FREEMASONRY, & SCIENTOL

Among *Eyes Wide Shut*'s many themes is an examination of ruling-class decadence; capitali designation of all things, even people, as objects to be bought, used, and discarded by the v wealthiest crooks. This includes alternately conspicuous and obscure allusions to the Freer Skull and Bones, Scientology, the CIA, and other related agencies and secret projects, as co to history, literature, occultism, and mythology. Kubrick isn't just exploring the sexual psyc between a husband and wife, but also the powerful role that socioeconomic class and the c the ultrawealthy elite play in shaping aspects of society—*including* the sexual psychology of people—in often unseen ways. But the people can still overcome the powers, if they open th

In this regard, critic Adrian Mack offered insightful analysis of *EWS* upon its 2007 DVD rer (*The Nerve* magazine). Mack observes that the opening shot shows Alice framed between M pillars and in front of a window with the blinds drawn in the shape of a triangle—the pyran of the Freemasons. In this first few seconds, much is implied about the weighty concepts th explores; a naked woman's body (with her back to us, so we can't see her face) immediately objectified between visual symbols of one of the world's oldest and most powerful secret so men. At one point Bill is accosted on the street by a group of young men—some wearing "Ya jackets—who hurl homophobic slurs at him. Mack notes that Yale University is "the home of

Bones, which is apparently bound by a circle of mutual, sexual blackmail. Those future Pres like to nail each other in coffins, I hear" (*The Nerve*, 20)—referring to the hazing and initiati secret societies and fraternities.

In *Fleshing Out Skull & Bones*, Kris Millegan outlines the historic role of this organization. I describes the roots of Skull and Bones as beginning with Yale graduate Nathan Hale, a men Culper Ring, "one of America's first intelligence operations" which was established by Geor Washington during the British occupation of New York City in the American Revolutionary membership of The Order of Skull and Bones has included numerous powerbrokers and US Presidents since its official birth in 1832 (Millegan, 1-12). Three generations of Bush males v members of S&B: George W. Bush (former US president), George H.W. Bush (former US pre vice president, and CIA director), and Prescott Bush (a banker and later US Senator who he Hitler's regime) (7-15, 676). Some allege S&B was connected with a secret program called *Pr Monarch*, a "mind-control project...which started in Nazi Germany" (Millegan, 15). Given the Skull and Bones—born out of Yale, a school of the elite, and parent organization to the CIA- membership of men in positions of extreme power, Kubrick's reference to Yale is surely no

Nor are visual references to the Freemasons, a secret society dating back centuries, with sy and traditions that have infiltrated modern culture through art, architecture, and politics. Masonic pillars and pyramidal crest shape of the opening shot appear repeatedly in *EWS*; t are seen framing either side of the entranceway to the Somerton mansion, and the triangul diamond-shaped crest is visible on buildings when Bill walks the streets. In *Freemasons: Ins World's Oldest Secret Society*, H. Paul Jeffers writes that detractors of Freemasonry have "de as a seed of paganism and/or being anti-Christian, explorers of dark mysteries of the Occu of Satanism" (158). Jeffers lists powerful historical figures who were Masons: Winston Churc Diefenbaker, Benjamin Franklin, J. Edgar Hoover, Ronald Reagan, and Henry Ford, among c (213-219).

Mansion ballroom dance scene with Nick Nightingale (Todd Field) blindfolded, in *Eyes Wide Shu* (1999)

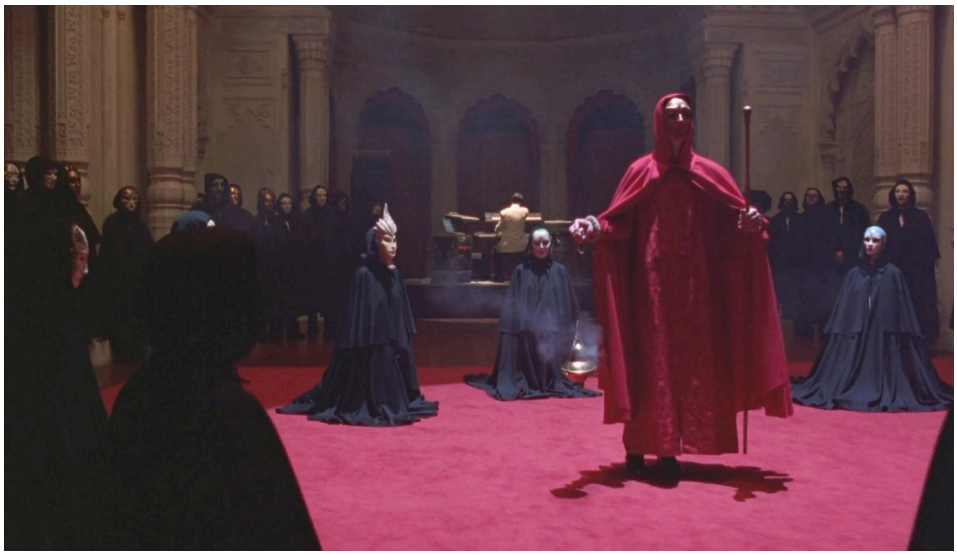
The book *Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry* describes aspects of their secret ce "The blindfold is common to almost all secret societies...in some societies the initiate is no

blindfolded, but all members in the room are masked or hooded" (235). In *EWS*, Nick is blin and the mansion guests are masked and hooded. Members of both S&B and Freemasons ar exclusively *men*, although women are sometimes *used* in sex rituals, as in *EWS*. As such, the presents a disturbing look at misogyny, as women in the film, *and* in reality, (and the *concep* women as objects of pleasure) are co-opted and commercialized—packaged, bought, used, thrown out, by the men who run the world.

Another organization alluded to is the Church of Scientology, a kind of pseudoreligious me that actively courts wealthy participants in order to expand its financial power base. The m obvious connection is that Tom Cruise is a dedicated Scientologist. *EWS* includes a young r officer as the subject of Alice's fantasy, and L. Ron Hubbard—the founder of Scientology—w *intelligence* officer, as biographer Russell Miller states in *Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Stor Hubbard* (97). Adrian Mack expands on the significance of Scientology in connection to othe societies, stating that in the 1940s Hubbard was a disciple of famed occultist Aleister Crowl was a 33-degree Mason. Around this time, in the CIA's early days, Hubbard may have been i Project MKUltra and the related Project Monarch. Although information about Project Mon obscure, it "refers to a mythical mind control experiment that allowed US intelligence agen create sex slaves" (*The Nerve*, 20). Mack proposes that perhaps *Eyes Wide Shut* is actually ab Cruise, and Scientology itself:

> Cruise, a successful but probably miserable and not very intelligent man, trapped in both his career and his mendacious public sexual persona...in a film about himself; a mid-level servant to the elite...caught in a web of sexual blackmail, with a virtual sex slave for a wife...a serf who might be allowed a little more access than most, but not much (Adrian Mack, *The Nerve*, 20)

EWS's allusions to past and present power organizations, and to symbols from antiquity, se endless. Freemasonry, Skull and Bones, Scientology, the CIA. The Rockefellers, The Rothsc Royal Family of England. Religion, mythology, occultism. The Christian Church. The Churc Satan. Nazism. One could, and several have, written whole books analyzing the motifs in Ku films (see this essay's Works Cited).



Masquerade sex ceremony in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* ***Indie Wire*** *(2024)*

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EYES, STARS, & MIRRORS

Eyes are a prominent Kubrick motif, featured in virtually all his films. The "Kubrick Stare" i
slow, zoom-in close-ups of the faces of Jack Torrance in *The Shining*, Alex DeLarge in *A Clo*
Orange, the red eye of HAL in *2001*, etc. In *Clockwork*, Alex wears eyeball cufflinks, and has
pinned open with the "treatment". In *EWS*, Bill examines Mandy's eyes, eye exam posters ar
office, the word "eyes" appears on a taxicab, and so on. In a mystifying shot, the projected i
an eye flashes onto Bill's back as he enters his apartment upon returning home from the m
could just be a reflection of light off the camera lens, and it's very brief—occurring at 1:30:1
in the film—but pause the movie in this spot to see that the image undoubtedly looks like a

The eye is another Freemasonry symbol, and appears on American money. The inner-minc
The all-seeing eye. The surveillance aspect of the ruling elite, in which they seem to know
move—like at the mansion's gate when he looks up into the eye of the security camera—rec
George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in which the totalitarian state, known as "Big Brothe
"Thought Police", watches everyone: "...the poster with the enormous face gazed from the w
one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move
BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption ran beneath it" (Orwell, 5).

The "Kubrick Stare": when his characters look directly at the camera with head tilted slightly down—as Alice (Nicole Kidman) does in this shot in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* ***imdb.com*** *(2019)*

In the source novella *Dream Story*, the protagonist is elbowed on the street by one of severa "fraternity" youths who walk by—the equivalent of the Yale students in *EWS*. The one who b him has a "bandage over his left eye" (Schnitzler, 22). Kubrick, however, left this out of his a of a story about eyes and seeing. In the late 1950s, Kubrick had signed on to direct *One-Eye* (1961)—only to abandon the project due mainly to disputes with its star Marlon Brando, wh directing it himself (Vincent LoBrutto, *Stanley Kubrick: A Biography*, 164). Leaving *Dream St* eyed, eyepatch-wearing guy out of *Eyes Wide Shut* parallels Kubrick leaving *One-Eyed Jack* film repertoire.

At Ziegler's party, a woman Bill flirts with says she remembers him from when they previou when she had something caught in her *eye* at Rockefeller Plaza and he assisted her. Site of t giant Christmas tree—another of *EWS*'s recurring symbols—New York City's Rockefeller Pl built by the Rockefellers, one the wealthiest families in history. The Somerton mansion in *E* Mentmore Towers, a 19th-century English country house built for the Rothschild family, a the world's biggest banking empires.

Considering Kubrick started out as a still photographer for *Look* magazine, it's fitting he en career with *Eyes Wide Shut*, which contains so many references to eyes, looking, and seeing *Shining* is set in the *Overlook* Hotel, another Kubrick movie that has been analyzed to death *EWS*, has had many details *overlooked*. When describing the naval officer, Alice says to Bill, *glanced* at me as he walked past. Just a *glance*." In Bill's medical examination room, he says " forward to Christmas?" to his boy patient. And in Ziegler's bathroom, Bill attends to Mandy her overdose. "Can you open your eyes for me?" he says, "Let me see you *open your eyes*." An "Look at me. Look at me. Look at me. *Look at me*."

The Spanish film *Open Your Eyes* (*Abre los Ojos*, 1997), by writer-director Alejandro Amenáb remade as *Vanilla Sky* starring Tom Cruise, which registers as kind of a cinematic footnote *Wide Shut* with themes also involving sex, dreams, duality, and masks. The first and last wo spoken in both versions are "open your eyes", which is also a better title than *Vanilla Sky*—b perhaps Cruise (who also co-produced the film) didn't want to star in another movie with " the title so soon after *EWS*. It was released in 2001, as was Amenábar's follow-up *The Other* story starring Nicole Kidman. Todd Field (*EWS*'s Nick Nightingale) wrote and directed *In th* also 2001—about affairs of the heart gone terribly wrong—and had reportedly consulted Ku about it while shooting *EWS*. The film stars William Mapother, the first cousin of Tom Crui Thomas Cruise Mapother). 2001 was also the year Steven Spielberg's *A.I.* came out, which K spent years developing. And *2001* is, of course, the title of Kubrick's most celebrated work.

The eight-pointed star—*The Star of Venus*—appears repeatedly in *Eyes Wide Shut*. Venus

The eight-pointed *Star of Venus* behind Sandor Szavost (Sky du Mont) and Alice (Nicole Kidman) in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

is the Roman Goddess of love, beauty, sex,
desire, and fertility.

Stars are another prominent symbol in *EWS*. Five-pointed stars—pentagrams—appear in tl
background as Christmas decorations at Ziegler's party, in the diner, at the toy store, and a
emblem on the naval officer's uniform. The pentagram has numerous historical uses, from
mathematics—the symbol for the "golden ratio"—through Western, Eastern, religious, and
symbology. Inverted, it's used by the Church of Satan as its logo, and by Aleister Crowley w
claimed it represents the descent of spirit into matter.

The book ***Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*** describes eight-pointed stars-
also appear in the background at Ziegler's—as an ancient symbol called the *Star of Venus* (o
of Ishtar) that originates from Assyrian, Babylonian, and Phoenician goddess-worship cultu
representation of Venus (169-170). In Roman mythology, Venus is the goddess of love, beaut
sex, and fertility. A painting on the wall behind Bill as he sits in Sharkey's coffee shop is *Ast
Syriaca* (1877), by Dante Rossetti. Astarte is also a goddess of love and beauty and represent
femininity—the ancient Semitic and Syrian equivalent to Venus. The Venus astronomical sy
the same one used in biology to denote the female sex—a circle with a small cross below it-
the symbol for copper in alchemy. Polished copper was used to make mirrors in ancient tir
so the symbol for Venus has also been interpreted as representing the Mirror of the Godde
is used today in intrauterine birth control devices; copper ions kill sperm or render them i
With all the mirrors around, no wonder Bill is so flaccid.

In *Eyes Wide Shut*, Bill Harford (Tom Cruise) sits in a coffee shop beneath the painting *Astarte Syriaca* (1877) by Dante Rossetti. Astarte is the Goddess of love and beauty, the Semitic and Syrian equivalent to Venus.

Astarte Syriaca (1877) by Dante Rossetti - *Image via* **Wikimedia** *(2023)*

Mirrors are all over the place in *EWS*. The very first shot shows Alice undressing, with her l
in the Harfords' apartment dressing room. The light is on and a full-size mirror is visible b
but Alice's reflection in the mirror is *not* visible. The second shot is of Bill in the same roon
clothed, with his back to us—seemingly peeking out the window through Venetian blinds. T
off so Bill is in the dark, but his reflection *is* visible in the mirror beside him. The third sho
Bill moving from the bedroom to the bathroom, where he looks at himself in the mirror.

Mirrors appear at Ziegler's, Domino's, and the Harfords', with characters peering into them reflections of themselves—especially Alice. Frequently told how "beautiful", "stunning", and she looks, Alice's identity is validated by others according to her physical appearance. In th where Alice and Bill start to make love, his attention is focused solely on her, but she is lool herself in the mirror, a moment "of clearest self-recognition, an uncomfortable glimpse of really is" (Kreider, *Introducing*). The mirrors also invoke Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking* about a girl named Alice who climbs through a mirror into a fantasy world of inverted logic masks that also appear throughout *EWS*, the mirror symbolizes the characters' exploration their image, and their secret identities in contrast to how they appear to the outside world.

Fascinatingly, the film itself is also a kind of mirror, structurally. The climactic mansion sc in the exact middle; it commences at 70 minutes in, lasts for 20 minutes, and ends with 70 remaining in the 160-minute-long movie. When Bill's cab pulls up to the mansion, the SOM sign is to right of the driveway, but a few seconds later the sign is on the left. When he retu next day, he drives up to the gate from the opposite direction than the cab had approached Leading up to the mansion scene, Bill engages in a number of scenarios—at Ziegler's, his of patient's house, Domino's apartment, the jazz club, the costume store. And following the m scene he revisits each location. This near-perfect mirror structure of the *Eyes Wide Shut* na arc reinforces the mirror as a symbol of duality and alternate dimensions, as reflected thro shape and time of the film itself; mise-en-abyme. It also shows Kubrick's tendency for uno story structure, as conventional films follow a narrative trajectory in which the climax occu last third before a brief conclusion. Yet he was always one to reinvent, transcending the usu storytelling constraints of traditional cinema to create something thoroughly unique.

Nicole Kidman as Alice in front of a mirror, a prominent motif in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

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CHRISTMAS TREES, LIGHTS, RAINBOWS, & MA

Another example of meaningful visual symbolism in *EWS* is the inclusion of a Christmas tr single scene, except one—the masquerade ball. In this scene, however, although there is nc Christmas tree adorned with ornaments and lights as in every other setting, an evergreen f surrounds the mansion itself, and unadorned Christmas tree-sized pines frame the entran front of Masonic pillars. Most of *Eyes Wide Shut* was filmed at London's *Pinewood* Studios.

Some Freemason rituals derive from paganism, an element of which is nature and goddess The Christmas custom of decorating trees originates from pagan associations with nature, femininity, and fertility; the evergreen tree was regarded as a phallic symbol of fertility wo representing an erect penis—like to build a highrise building, or put up a Christmas tree, is it. Decorative balls and tinsel represent testicles and semen, and the wreath is a yonic syml representing a woman's vaginal opening with the red bow symbolizing childbirth blood. Th adopted by Christianity from the pagan winter festival named after the Roman sun god "So ("Unconquered Sun") which celebrated the lengthening of the sun's rays at winter solstice, t of light over darkness (*Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, 155).

Christmas trees—a pagan symbol of fertility worship—appear in every scene except one, in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

There are a whole lot of lights in the darkness in *Eyes Wide Shut*. Our protagonist, insecure sexuality, travels through a realm bursting with symbols of fertility worship; Christmas tre decorations, lights. Near the end of the movie, Bill returns home and switches off the Chris lights. What does this mean? That Bill is impotent, can't climax? Psychologically, at least. O he's finally come to terms with his feelings of sexual inadequacy. Manhattan's Rockefeller C

the site of a massive Christmas tree that is erected and lit in public ceremony annually. So phallic symbol, when that woman at Ziegler's mentions the location to Bill, it's sexual innue they're talking about a giant phallus.

In *Traumnovelle*, the time setting is "just before the close of the Carnival season" (4). Kubric transplants the source novella's time and place—1920s Vienna—to 1999 New York City durin Christmas season; the high point of consumerist indulgence in North American society. Th developed as an end-of-winter celebration before the Christian season of Lent—a time of f abstaining from various luxuries. In contrast, the Carnival typically involves celebratory pr that include alcohol consumption (and other substances), feasting, parades, and wearing of and costumes. Other Carnival features include theatrical displays of social satire, mockery authorities, grotesquely exaggerated sexual behaviours, and generally debaucherous and d acts.

In the novella it's implied the couple are Jewish, as author Schnitzler was. Kubrick was also descent, but said he wanted the couple to be "vanilla" and that Bill should be a "Harrison Fo goy", although Ford's mother was Jewish (*The Wolf at the Door*, 29). The surname *Harford* is portmanteau of HARrison FORD, an allusion to the actor. Kubrick's transposition of the no European-Jewish protagonist to an all-American, upper-middle class WASP fits with the pa substitution of Carnival with Christmas, magnifying the commentary on American capitali many aspects of the Carnival are still present, particularly at the masked orgy.

The masks Kubrick uses are Venetian, which broadens the themes of commerce and consu Venice was long a center of mercantilism and eroticism. Masks hang on the walls of Domin apartment, and "domino" is indeed a style of Venetian Carnival mask. In the film's opening Bill peers out his apartment window through *Venetian blinds*, which also appear in his doct and Domino's bedroom. It's like Bill looking out through the eyeholes of his Venetian mask, inside his own psyche, and recalls the saying "the eyes are the windows to the soul". Masks throughout the film as a prime symbol of identity; our own self-perception versus the perc others. Disguises we wear in different scenarios. The roles we play. The secrets we keep.

Masks used in *Eyes Wide Shut* are of traditional Venetian Carnival design (1999)

For many, Christmas represents indulgence, temptation, desire—for parties, food, liquor, c or bigger and better material possessions that often don't satisfy. Just as Bill Harford is con *sexually* tempted throughout the film, without ever actually engaging or achieving satisfact consumption aspect of Christmas has, for many, supplanted religious practices associated it's an appropriate season in which to set this story that includes many ancient symbols an practices that have been co-opted and deformed by power structures throughout history. itself is a multifaceted holiday encompassing elements of cultural anthropology, mythology capitalism, religion, nature worship, and paganism. The "Christmas Movie" mixes in with o aspects of Americana, contributing to the holiday atmosphere for many who seek not only celebration of materialism and sensual decadence, but also comfort and a sense of wonder

Christmas has been marketed to children as a fairy story full of magic. But Kubrick project through a dark, twisted lens, invoking a sense of satire and qualifying *EWS* as an unconven Christmas Movie in its own right. In the holiday favourite *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), an ang descends from heaven at Christmastime to help a depressed man appreciate his life by sho a terrifying alternate reality in which he had never existed. As an alternative Christmas Mo parallels *It's a Wonderful Life* in that both stories depict a man who undergoes a frightening through a dystopian nightmare world during the Christmas season. *EWS* draws parallels as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) in that both protagonists are also shaken to the c they're exposed to disturbing alternate plains of existence. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, and Future. Kubrick described *The Shining* as "a ghost story", and while *EWS* is not clearly i same category, there are plenty of clues indicating that many of the events and characters witness are *not real*, leaving a haunting effect of its own.

Another popular Christmas story is the classic children's book *How the Grinch Stole Christm* by Dr. Seuss, seen in *EWS* on the kitchen table when Alice and Helena (Madison Eginton) ar breakfast. Later at the mansion orgy, a naked party guest wearing a very Grinch-like mask having sex with a masked woman. It's another example of parallels between different aspec life; his home life and his fantasy life, his external and internal worlds—and further implies much of what we see is in fact in Bill's mind. But where fantasy and reality start and end isn concrete, it's all swirling together concurrently, enigmatically, paradoxically. On a side not life Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman were married on Christmas Eve; December 24th, 1990.

Tom Cruise as Bill in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* ***talkfilmsociety.com*** *(2019)*

The Christmastime setting also provides Kubrick with an opportunity to create a sumptuou feast for the viewer. The movie is saturated with a dreamlike array of colours and lights; so to an almost obnoxious degree, in echoing the theme of Christmas season excess. Kubrick exclusively used "practical" lighting in *EWS* (as he also did in *Barry Lyndon*)—lights that app diegetic world of the film (lamps, streetlights, Christmas lights). But since these light levels normally considered too low for a movie shoot, Kubrick "push-developed" the entire film, i the lab to leave the film stock in the developing bath longer than is usual—essentially overp it in order to enhance the images and achieve a unique, slightly surreal look (*The Stanley K Archives*, 771). This lush multicoloring embellishes *Eyes Wide Shut*'s multilayered narrative f connects it with another recurring symbol in the film: rainbows. The movie itself, both lite figuratively, contains layers of different colours forming one greater whole, a thing of wond

Rainbows are first referenced at Ziegler's party when Bill flirts with the two women who se leading him away. When he stops to inquire where they are going, the women reply, "Where rainbow ends." At this point Bill hesitates, unsure if he wants to go where the rainbow ends popular mythology, what's at the end of the rainbow? A pot of gold. This once again symbol money, wealth, desire, and the illusion of an unattainable goal. Bill's reluctance to pursue t gold" in this instance, even though he's obviously flirting with the women, exemplifies his p hesitancy at other times in the story, as he seeks out sexual opportunities without ever actu having sex—hence the character's confusion over his self-identity, and the paradox the titl

The rainbow reference returns with the store *Rainbow Costume Rental*, which also happens situated *over* another store named *Under the Rainbow*. According to Adrian Mack, "The rain references are rooted in *The Wizard of Oz*, which is important to the mythology of Project Monarch...In the '70s, the codename for L. Ron Hubbard's top secret base...was 'Over the Ra (*The Nerve*, 20). One of the women is named *Gayle*, which connects to Bill's friend Nick Nigl and to Dorothy *Gale*, the protagonist of *The Wizard of Oz*. And *The Wizard of Oz*'s theme son the Rainbow" includes such lyrics as "the dreams that you dare to dream really do come tru

The "Mysterious Woman" & a masked stranger in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* ***timkreider.com*** *(2019)*

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DREAMS & ALTERNATE REALITIES

Dreams, as discussed by Martin Scorsese in his introduction to Michel Ciment's book *Kubr* another of *Eyes Wide Shut*'s main topics. Scorsese emphasizes that the English translation Schnitzler's German-titled *Traumnovelle* is *Dream Story*. He attributes the film's initial wid negative reaction to the fact that "audiences really had no preparation for a dream movie th announce itself as such, without the usual signals—hovering mists, people appearing and disappearing at will or floating off the ground" (vii).

With a subtly antithetical design, *EWS* is a story conveyed in an unusual manner, leaving m viewers scratching their heads. But, Scorsese says, Kubrick was a visionary: "like all visiona spoke the truth. And no matter how comfortable we think we are with the truth, it always c profound shock when we're forced to meet it face-to-face" (vii). One of the supreme truths film being that not only is extreme wealth *not* sexy, but in fact nightmarish and grotesque.

Scorsese's note about *EWS* being a dream movie that isn't presented with the usual markin is an important point in understanding how to regard it, and perhaps why many find it so c or an outright failure. But when approaching the movie with this in mind, a lot makes sens perspective that what we see is *not actually happening*, except in Bill Harford's imagination. illogical seems more logical then. Although it might not be readily apparent, much of what witnessing may in fact be a dream.

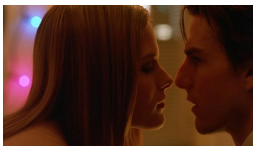
Alice wakes from a dream in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

Several times throughout Bill's adventure he shows his medical ID card to people he meets. continually confirm his status, identity, and verify his existence—to himself perhaps more t others. "ID" is of course the abbreviation for "identification", and also the spelling of the "id' according to Sigmund Freud is the unconscious part of the mind that contains a person's p instinctive impulses, including the libido:

> It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality, what little we know of it we have learned from our study of the dreamwork and of course the construction of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego...It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle. (Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 105-106)

When Bill offers to show his ID (to Mr. Milich, to Sally, to the diner waitress), he's in effect s from a Freudian standpoint—"Let me show you my *id*". Freud says that in the id: "contrary i exist side by side, without cancelling each other out....There is nothing in the id which corr to the idea of time" (*New Introductory Lectures*, 106).

Time *is* a prominent thread throughout the story, which unfolds, preposterously, over the c about two-and-a-half days. Bill's second line in the film is, "Listen, you know we're running *late*." He continually looks at his wristwatch; before entering the Nathanson residence, in fr Sonata Café the day after the Somerton affair, and at Milich's where he says, "I've obviously a bit *late* tonight." Bill is like the White Rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland* who laments his lat while looking at his pocket watch. Outside Somerton the cab driver asks Bill, "How long you be?" Bill replies, "I don't know, maybe an hour or more, but maybe only ten minutes." When asks Bill for the time, he checks his watch and says "Ten past twelve." A moment later in her apartment, Domino says, "Don't worry, I don't keep track of the time." Then Alice calls Bill a much longer he will be. Bill: "It could be awhile." Alice: "Any idea how long?" Bill: "No, I don't know." It's dreamtime.



Labelling *EWS* an erotic thriller isn't really an accurate description except as the most basi superficial categorization of such a complex film. Yes, sex is a subject in the movie, and yes suspenseful at times, but the only sex we're shown is in a situationally gratuitous context a mansion scene, and it's less erotic than it is cold and voyeuristic since we're seeing through of the protagonist who himself doesn't actually engage sexually. It might more fittingly be d as a slipstream fantasy; a subgenre of speculative fiction in which characters inexplicably " and out of alternate timelines, parallel dimensions, and/or streams of consciousness in wh similar qualities persist while others are skewed or inverted. Loops in time. Characters' tra transposed. Illogical scenarios.

On one hand the genre prescribed to a story doesn't matter much, and is merely a label to a the work. But on the other hand this label can be important, to frame the work in a certain and prepare the audience for a particular mindset through which to receive it. But whateve genre, *EWS* is certainly a visually and aurally dazzling, thought-provoking work with seemi infinite, intertwining layers, symbols, and allusions—worthy of considerable debate.

Kubrick was always very involved in his films' promotional campaigns. But since he died fo before *EWS* was released, who knows how much say he had in it in this case. Although it's n agreed upon that *EWS* marketing was flawed in mislabelling it an erotic thriller, in retrospe actually fitting to have been billed as such; it strengthens its standing as satire in that it's n and creepy than hot and steamy, and so perhaps appropriately misunderstood. A sex movie the protagonist never has sex. A dream movie that isn't obviously one. Kubrick even kind of the "it was all a dream" cliché B-movie ending with the last bit of dialogue between Bill and says they should be grateful that they've survived all of their adventures, "Whether they wer only a dream," to which Bill replies, "And no dream is ever just a dream."

Masks are a recurring symbol in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

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DUALITY & DOPPELGÄNGERS

Eyes Wide Shut is filled with doppelgängers, duality, doubling, repetition; multiple characte symbols alluding to aspects of each other in a story that plays as a series of illusions.

Following his wife's revelation of her sexual fantasy about another man, Dr. Bill Harford be odyssey by going to his patient Lou Nathanson's residence. In this scene there are visual cu has passed into a fantasy of his own, starting with the arrangement of set pieces in the lobb enters a room full of paired objects; there are two elevator doors, two glass doors, and two Positioned on opposite ends of the screen are two potted plants, two stools, two lamps, two

tables, and two framed pictures, each item apparently identical to its duplicate. Bill procee the interior of the house through this picture of duality as if entering into a mirror. He wal hallway into a room where his recently deceased patient lies, whose daughter Marion (Mari Richardson) sits by the side of the bed. Bill sits next to her in a chair identical to the one sh with a pair of identical windows behind them.

Marion suddenly kisses Bill and tells him she's in love with him. She's engaged to be marrie says, but would gladly leave her fiancé for the chance to be with Bill, or at the very least to l him. Harford declines her offer, and soon after the fiancé, Carl, arrives. Marion offering he Bill mirrors his own wife's fantasy, who described herself as having been willing to give up together for a chance to have sex with a man she didn't know.

The protagonist of *Eyes Wide Shut* enters a dreamlike mirror reality full of doubling and repetition (1999) - *Image via* **imdb.com***/Warner Bros. (2024)*

And here's where another fascinating metacinematic element is presented. Carl is played b actor named Tom: Thomas Gibson, who was born on the exact same day, month, and year, Cruise—July 3rd, 1962. The two actors bear a moderate resemblance, with similar physique colour, and hairstyle—and in the film Carl's hair is parted on the opposite side of his head t hair is parted. When the Nathansons' housekeeper Rosa opens the door for Carl, the camer of view is from the opposite angle than when she opened the door for Bill minutes before. "math professor", meaning he has a PhD and is therefore a "doctor", and Bill is a doctor of m In real life, they have the same birthday, the same first name, and a similar boyish all-Ame Gibson's character's name is Carl *Thomas*; initials C.T., the reverse of Tom Cruise's initials

And it gets even more interesting when looking at the name etymology. *Thomas* is the Angli form of the Italian *Tomasso*, from the Aramaic *toma* (*t'om'a*), which means "twin" (*Dictionary Names*, 260). The first name of the actors *Thomas* Cruise and *Thomas* Gibson, who in real lif exact same birthdate, and play alternate reality versions of each other in *EWS*—their name "twin". And the name *Thomas* is also etymologically linked to the word *mason*—as in the *Fre* meaning "one who works with stone"; *mason* is from *maso*, which is also shortened from *To* name *Carl* is the shortened form of *Charles*, meaning "free man" (*Dictionary of First Names*, character's full name then essentially translates as "Free Mason". And Saint *Thomas*, one of

Twelve Apostles, was known as "Doubting Thomas", which fits Bill's character. Rosa refers t "Mr. Thomas"—that is, "Mr. Twin".

I'd always wondered how Thomas Gibson, known primarily as a television actor, got this bi Kubrick film. In addition to playing a doppelgänger (German for "double-goer") of sorts to Gibson previously starred in another movie with Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman; *Far and A* (1992), in which he played the rival of Cruise's character vying for the affections of Kidman' character. *Far and Away* was the second film Cruise and Kidman starred in together, the th last was *Eyes Wide Shut*. The sitcom Gibson starred in at the time was set in kind of a parall universe to *EWS*; *Dharma & Greg*, in which he played a lawyer (rather than a doctor) who is yuppie marriage with a thin blonde woman.

Thomas Gibson as Carl Thomas—a doppelgänger of sorts to Tom Cruise's character in *Eyes Wid Shut* (1999) - *Image: Warner Bros.*

Bill has slipped into a slanted version of his wife's fantasy, reflected through his own mind, he has taken the role of the stranger his wife desired, Carl is him, and Marion is his wife Ali fitting then that Kidman's character is named Alice, calling to mind Lewis Carroll's heroine *Through the Looking-Glass*. But here it's Bill who goes through the mirror—in another slipst dreamlike quality of gender reversal. *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Gl What Alice Found There* (1871) are considered among the best examples of "literary nonsens defined in *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense* (1988), it's a fiction subgenre that combines the with the illogical, balancing "a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of mea Elements of literary nonsense "are primarily those of negativity or mirroring, imprecision mixture, infinite repetition, simultaneity, and arbitrariness" (47). These descriptions apply well to *EWS*. In this segment, Bill steps through the looking-glass, and from then on much of the story takes place in a nonsensical dreamworld. Inside the mirror of his wife's disclos fantasy, Bill's internal landscape, his emotional state of jealousy and sexual guilt, are reflec externally.

The tilted way this scene mirrors Alice's fantasy serves the film's enigmatic quality, giving something to decipher and contemplate. The clues are there, but Kubrick skews elements j enough so that it isn't all obvious at first glance. Only close inspection reveals that Nathans

bedroom wallpaper and the Harfords' bedroom curtains have the same fleur-de-lis pattern Richardson is eight years older than Kidman, has a Swedish accent, and other than both ha blonde hair they share only a mild resemblance. Likewise Gibson resembles Cruise somewl enormously. Near-exact parallels abound throughout the film, but exact parallels aren't im apparent. After Bill returns home from the mansion, Alice describes herself as having a dre which many men are "fucking" her. At the mansion, many men are fucking many women, th himself doesn't engage sexually—so here, in a way, Alice has become a character in Bill's fa filtered through her own dream, just as he becomes a character in her fantasy, filtered thro dream.

Another noteworthy element of the Nathanson scene is the presence of the recently deceas man lying on the bed throughout. The character's last name is a possible allusion to the aforementioned Nathan Hale, a Yale graduate and spy recruited by George Washington dur American Revolution for independence from the British. Hale was hanged after being caug undercover across enemy lines in New York City; the same city where *EWS*'s Bill likewise be kind of a spy who goes undercover into hostile territory when he sneaks into the mansion i disguise. Naming Bill's wealthy patient Nathanson is another connection to power hierarch this case to historical colonial conflicts, and Yale, the birthplace of Skull and Bones and an institution of the wealthy.

The name *Nathan* also links to the Rothschild family; there were several Nathan Rothschild several generations, including *Louis Nathaniel* de Rothschild, Lionel *Nathan* de Rothschild, *Nathan* Mayer Rothschild—who was once the wealthiest man on earth. It was this latter Nat Mayer Amschel de Rothschild, who commissioned the building of Mentmore Towers, which the exterior of the Somerton mansion in *EWS*. Bill's patient Lou *Nathanson* has just died, a that night he goes to a mansion built by *Nathan's son*—the son of the wealthiest man on ear

Bill Harford is out of place at a secret masquerade party in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image: Warne Bros.*

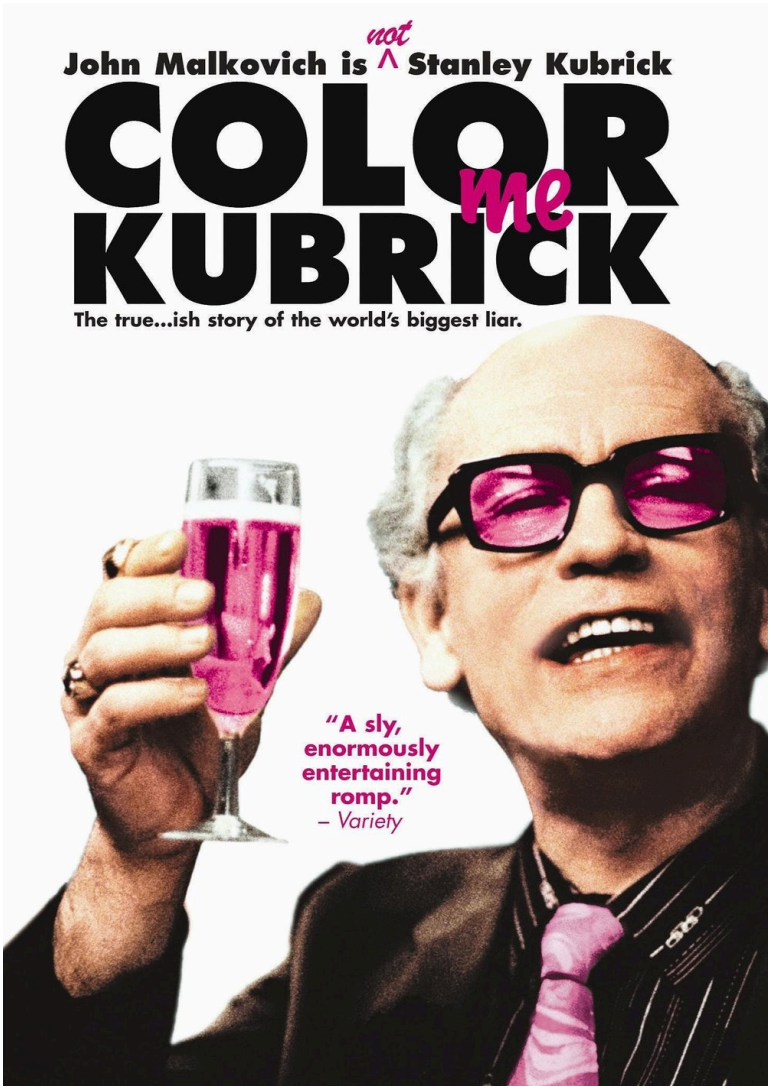
At the mansion Bill is confronted by a masked master of ceremonies credited as "Red Cloak on a throne ornamented with what appears to be a two-headed eagle, or possibly a two-he

snake—it's not entirely clear, but both have relevance. The double-headed eagle is an ancie iconographic symbol dating back some 5,000 years, spanning a variety of cultures through world; from Mesopotamia to the Byzantine Empire, and beyond. It has also been used as an by the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, a system of degrees employed by Freemasons, signifyi title "Grand Inspector".

In Egyptian mythology, the double-headed serpent is a creature named *Neheb Ka* who bind the soul—the *ka* and *ba*—together after death. Ancient Egyptians believed the ka—meaning and ba—"personality"—exist alongside the physical human body. Neheb Ka guards the entra underworld *Duat*, depicted in ancient Egyptian artworks as a "doubleworld" represented by hieroglyph of a five-pointed star inside a circle—like the decorative stars in *EWS*. The glyp name *Neheb Ka* resemble a double-headed snake, so it was portrayed as such, referring to t spiritual *double* of a person that leaves their body upon death—the vital essence which disti a living body from a dead one (*The Ancient Gods Speak*, 181). The surname of the actor who p Cloak, Leon *Vitali*, means "life" in Latin (*Latin and English Dictionary*, 452). Vitali played a ro Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* before becoming his personal assistant and/or casting director on a following films. In another case of meta-duality, Leon Vitali has the same birthday as Stanl Kubrick: July 26th—1948 and 1928, respectively.

Stanley Kubrick had a kind of real-life doppelgänger of his own. Alan Conway was a British who impersonated Kubrick for years throughout the 1990s, claiming to be the famous direc London's wealthy socialite circles in order to gain favours, free hotel rooms, dinners, drink this time the real Kubrick had long withdrawn from media attention, so Conway succeeded many—including some film critics who contacted Warner Brothers to set up an interview w "Kubrick". Warner Bros already knew of the scam but had been unable to identify the impos Stanley Kubrick himself was then apprised of the situation by his lawyer. Kubrick was said been fascinated by the idea. His wife Christiane was less impressed, as she reflected in a 20 interview with *The Guardian*: "It was an absolute nightmare. This strange doppelgänger wh pretending to be Stanley. Can you imagine the horror?"

Conway was tracked down by an assistant to Kubrick, Anthony Frewin, who then detailed t affair in a screenplay for what became the movie *Color Me Kubrick* (2005), wherein John Mal plays Conway posing as Kubrick. The movie was directed by Brian W. Cook, who had worke assistant director on *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*, and as a producer and assistant directo *Wide Shut*—and appears in it as Somerton's "Tall Butler". Alan Conway died of a heart attack months before Stanley Kubrick died, also of a heart attack.



John Malkovich plays a real-life Stanley Kubrick impersonator in *Color Me Kubrick* (2005)

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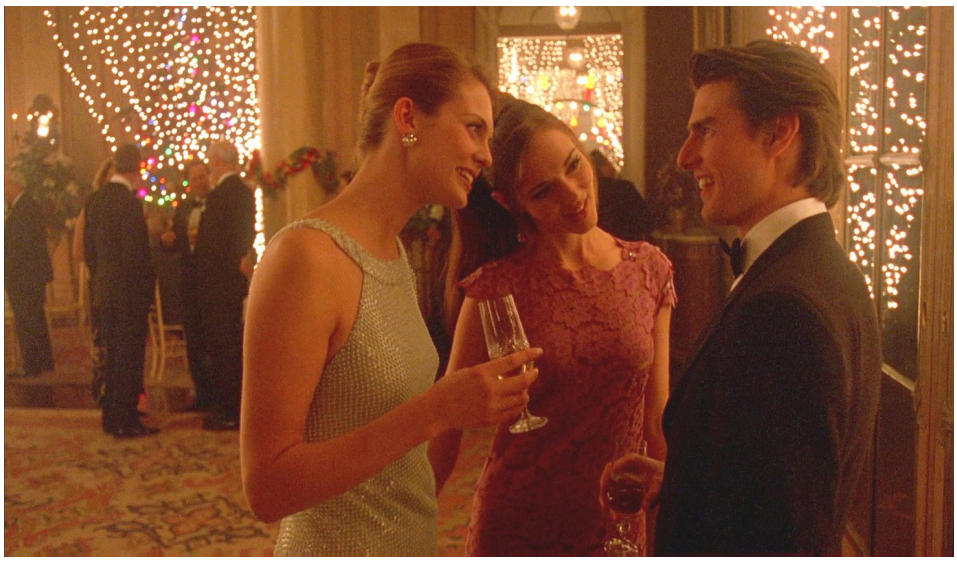
TWINSHIP & NAMES

Kubrick's interest in twinship has been evident since his directorial debut, the documentar *Day of the Fight* (1951). The 12-minute film follows a middleweight boxer on the day of a mat accompanied by his identical twin brother. Kubrick's *Lolita* features Peter Sellers playing tv different characters in "twin" roles of a sort—and the film's protagonist has a twinned name *Humbert*. *The Shining* also famously features the ghosts of twin girls. And *Eyes Wide Shut* ha countless instances of duality and twinning.

At Ziegler's party, Bill flirts with *two* women, one of whom is introduced as *Nuala Windsor*. *Nuala* means "beautiful", a fairy queen in Irish mythology (*Celtic Names*, 117). And *Windsor* ic

with the Royal Family of the United Kingdom, the House of Windsor, where bloodlines of th still hold power to this day. The other woman says her name is *Gayle*. But Nuala sounds Am while Gayle has a British accent, in another example of slipstream characteristic-swapping US/New York–UK/London couplings. *Gayle* is a variant of *Gail*, shortened from the English with Hebrew origins; an Old Testament character whose wealthy husband dies, and she rer king (*Dictionary of First Names*, 1)—so, a woman of high status. The actress who plays "Myst Woman" (voiced by an uncredited Cate Blanchett) at the mansion/Mandy's double is named Good. Kubrick's daughter Vivian, a filmmaker and composer, has been credited under the pseudonym *Abigail* Mead. *Gayle*/*Gail* etymology also attributes the meaning as "jovial" or "m same origin as the word "gay" which meant just that, before meaning homosexual. Kubrick spell the character's name as *Gayle* and not *Gail*.

Gayle refers to previously meeting Bill "on a very windy day". A *gale* is a "very strong wind", i connection with *Wind*sor. It is a very strong wind—a tornado—that whisks Dorothy Gale aw fantasyland Oz. Gayle and Nuala attempt to lead Bill away from the party to "where the rain and Dorothy Gale sings "Over the Rainbow" in the 1939 movie, where "dreams that you dare really do come true." Bill doesn't go with Gayle and Nuala, but he does go upstairs a momer when summoned by Ziegler to tend to his dirty work. And he later goes to *Rainbow Costume* which is situated over a store called *Under the Rainbow*. Remember that Scientology founde Hubbard reportedly had a secret base in California codenamed *Over the Rainbow*? And Tom a Scientologist. The connections continue.



Themes of doubling and twinship feature prominently in *Eyes Wide Shut*, as in this scene where Bill Harford flirts with "two models" (1999)

Further intriguing examples of twinning, duality—and *plurality*—revolve around the charac Marion. She only appears in that one scene; when Bill tries to reach her later, she's disappe is a pattern, of people vanishing when Bill looks for them again on his second day out; Mari Domino, Nick. Bill rebuffs Marion's advances just before her fiancé Carl arrives, and when Marion's the next day, Carl answers the phone. And Bill hangs up. Carl is an alternate Bill a an alternate Alice, so it's like Bill tries to call an alternate version of his wife, but she doesn and he hears himself pick up on the other side, but he doesn't want to talk to himself. Then after Bill hangs up the phone, offscreen in the looking-glass world Carl says to Marion, "I th

to go over there and show my face," after she just finished confessing her fantasy to Carl, o
away with Doctor Bill. As if it's a dreamtime loop, and it was Carl who called Bill at home th
just as Bill now calls Carl. And it carries on, mise-en-abyme, into the abyss...

The character's name is Marion Nathanson, the actress's name is Marie Richardson; *Mario*
a portmanteau of MARIe richardsON, as *Harford* is of HARrison FORD. The character's nam
Traumnovelle is "Marianne". Tom Cruise's sister is also named *Marian* (with the variant spel
his mother is *Mary*. Nicole Kidman's middle name is *Mary*. Stanley Kubrick's sister was nam
Barbara *Mary* Kubrick. Marie Richardson acted in several Ingmar Bergman films—who Kub
greatly admired—including her credit immediately prior to *EWS*, *In the Presence of a Clown*
opposite a character also named *Carl*. And—curiously, in relation to female character name
—among Marie Richardson's pre-*EWS* roles she played characters named *Marianne* (Mario
(Alice), and *Helena Hansson* (Helena Harford).

One of the Yale punks slams into Bill as he walks by, and says, "*Merry* Christmas, *Mary*!"—*m*
a homophobic slur, and sharing common etymology with *merry*. This of course connects to
Christmas, Christianity, the biblical characters of the Virgin Mary mother of Jesus, and Ma
Magdalene, and also evokes the Catholic Church's longstanding antigay stance. *Amanda* (M
means "lovable" from the Latin *amāre*, "to love"—linking to the English *merry* and *mary* whic
derivations also define as "beloved, delightful", from Hebrew, Syro-Aramaic, and Egyptian (
Miryam, *Maryam*), with variations in Celtic, French, Greek, Slavic (*Meara*, *Marie*, *Maria*). Ot
diminutive forms are: *Mira*, *Miri*, *Mariah*, *Molly*, and *Polly* (*Dictionary of First Names*, 13, and
Names, 84). The name of the cat painting at the Harfords' is *Polly* (by Kubrick's daughter Ka
which calls to mind a tiger stuffie on Domino's bed, the *Pink Pussycat Boutique* Bill passes o
walk, and the term "sex kitten". *Polly* becomes a nickname of *Mary* from *Molly*, and is also c
a nickname of *Dorothy* from *Dolly*. As in Dorothy *Gale* from Oz, which connects to Nick Nigl
Gayle the model, *Gay* meaning "merry", *Gayle* rhymes with *Yale*, and the Yale punks accuse
being *gay*.

Vinessa Shaw as Domino in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* **ScreenMusings** *(2019)*

EWS's central female characters are all portrayed in sexual contexts. There are numerous
Alice's place in society as a toy, like her husband, both of whom are paid for in full by the re

of the world, those like Ziegler and his mansion buddies. Kubrick wanted all the women at masked orgy to have bodies resembling Nicole Kidman's, as if mirror representations. Mari Domino, and the masked women all wear chokers—a necklace or band of fabric that fits closely around the neck—as if a collar or restraint, a symbol of captivity and servitude.

There are multiple parallels between Alice, Domino, Mandy (Julienne Davis), and Sally (Fay Masterson). The names Amanda (Mandy) and Domino have the same number of letters, wit consonants. Alice and Domino are associated by the colour purple of Alice's sheets and Do dress. And Domino and Sally mirror Nuala and Gayle; Domino and Nuala are both brownha wear purplish clothing, and Sally and Gayle are both redhaired and wear light bluish clothi women character names are near-exact aural anagrams: Alice, Sally, and Lisa (Bill's secret is played by the same-named *Lisa* Leone, and Ziegler's wife *Illona* is played by Leslie Lowe, two actresses' *and* characters' first and last names are aural anagrammatic composites of b own and the other's (Leone/Illona also connects to *Leon* Vitali). And *Illona* is a linguistic var *Helena*, the Harfords' daughter, which is from the Greek myth *Helen of Troy*, who had a twi

Fay Masterson as Sally in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) - *Image via* **ScreenMusings** *(2024)*

Alice became a popular girls' name due to *Alice in Wonderland*, from Old French and Germa "noble" (*Dictionary of First Names*, 3, 9). And *Bill* is shortened from *William*, with etymology the German *Wilhelm*; from *wil* meaning "will, desire" and *helm* meaning "conceal, protect", a *helmet* (*Dictionary*, 276). So, Bill's full name *William* translates as "conceal desire". The name *Ziegler* also has revelatory etymology. *Victor* is from the Latin for "winner" (*Dictionary*, 271). super-rich guy who has his way with everything, he's clearly a victor in this society. And *Zi* from the German *ziegelbrenner* which means "brick maker" (*German-English Dictionary*, 291 connecting to freemasons and to "Ku*brick*". A mason is a builder or layer of stone, and Free as a secret society evolved out of organized bodies of stonemasons thousands of years ago. "free" part indicates that the mason is not enslaved. So, Victor Ziegler's name and characte person at the top of the pyramid, a member of an ancient secret society of wealth and pow seekers. And *Stanley* itself also means "stone" ("stan"), plus "wood" ("leigh"; woods or a mead Old English (*Dictionary of First Names*, 252).

The etymology of *mason*—"one who works with stone"—shares the same origins as the nam from the Italian *maso*, shortened from *Tomasso*, which itself is from the Aramaic *toma*, whic "twin". The Anglicized form of *Tomasso* is *Thomas*; Tom Cruise, Tom Gibson, who have the e birthday, and play alternate reality versions of each other—their name means "twin", which the same root as the word "mason", which refers to freemasons, and means "brick maker", w translates from *Ziegler*. There is also a line of highly-sought-after Japanese-made collectib figurines called "Kubrick Toys", named after the director and launched in 2000, shortly afte death. *Ku* translates from Japanese as "nine", and each Kubrick figure (which resemble Leg is made up of nine body parts that toy collectors call "bricks".

Ziegler was also the surname of the Nazi official in charge of confiscating anti-Nazi, Jewish protest art; Adolf Ziegler, said to be Hitler's favourite painter, was tasked by the Nazi Party the purging of what they termed "degenerate art"—and artists or museum/gallery owners w created or promoted it. Another Nazi official, Hans Severus *Ziegler*, was in charge of purgi "degenerate music" and musicians. In *EWS*, Szavost mentions Victor Ziegler's wonderful ar collection. Ziegler is played by Sydney Pollack, who was Jewish. And Ziegler is *also* the surn *EWS*'s Steadicam operator—Elizabeth Ziegler—who worked with Cruise again on his next fi *Magnolia* (1999) in which he portrays a misogynistic motivational speaker instructing men pick up women. Elizabeth Ziegler's camera "eye" following Bill around is like Victor Ziegler' henchmen following Bill around, watching him.

Stanley Kubrick and Sydney Pollack on the set of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

Also note the aural and visual similarities in the names *Stanley Kubrick* and *Sydney Pollack*. names start with "S" and end with "–ey". Both last names are seven letters, with the identica of consonants and vowels in the exact same positions, ending with "–ck". And this is really last two letters of the first word spoken in *EWS* are also "–ey"—"Hon***ey***"—and the last two le last word spoken are "–ck"—"Fu***ck***". The name resemblance of ***S***tanl***ey*** Kubri***ck*** and ***S***ydn***ey*** one thing, but "–ey" and "–ck" being the last two letters of the first and last words spoken in

and the last two letters of the first and last names of the director Stanl–***ey*** Kubri–***ck*** seems
unbelievable coincidence.

But given Kubrick's infamous—some have said *tyrannical*—control of all his filmic details, s
much of this is no accident. Nathanson, Nathan Hale, Nathan Rothschild. Tom, Thomas, "tw
Harford, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*. Illona, Helena. Harrison Ford, Harford, and Hertf
the county outside of London, UK, where Stanley lived (and died)—meaning "the land of pe
named *Hertford*".

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PERIPHERALITY & PARALLELISM

A multitude of details in the background, and foreground, continually reinforce the film's
intersecting thematic elements. When Gayle reminds Bill they'd met before, he recalls, "You
something in your *eye*". She responds jokingly, "about half of 5th Avenue". The next night, Bi
traverses what looks like an imagined rendering of New York City's Greenwich Village. Som
establishing shots are of real locations in New York and England, but most of the street sets
constructed on Pinewood Studio soundstages in London, designed to resemble an alternat
version of 1999 NYC. Various buildings and storefronts appear to change location throughou
movie, as do other objects. Outside the costume store the *Gillespie's* diner neon sign is visib
Bill, which in the previous scene neighboured the Sonata Café. But Bill arrives at the costu
in a cab. It's like he's going in circles, wandering the same four- or five-block radius over a
with elements repositioned upon each pass-through of Dreamcity. Maybe Bill's travelling a
of 5th Avenue" over and over, because he now has "half of 5th Avenue" in *his* "eye"—that is, ir
mind's eye.

The redressing of facades and reuse of set decoration in *EWS* was at least in part the result
error in booking a lot that was smaller than Kubrick wanted at Pinewood Studios. How muc
made conscious use of this due to budget and space economy, to enhance Bill's dreamlike,
odyssey—as a creative improvisation—or how much was preplanned, or accidental, is up fo
But the effect is nonetheless enchanting and fits with the film's mirroring and dream them

Nighttime cityscape in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

Linkages between objects, characters, and dialogue occur throughout *EWS* from start to en very first shot shows Alice undressing in her apartment, and in the corner are two tennis r couple screentime minutes later, Bill and Alice are greeted by Victor Ziegler and his wife Ill their house party, and Victor thanks Bill for recommending a medical specialist who fixed h injury: "That osteopath you sent me to, the guy that worked on my arm? You ought to see m now." On Ziegler's bathroom wall, above a naked Mandy lying down, is a painting of a naked lying down in a similar position, almost like a mirror. The woman in the painting appears t pregnant, evoking the sex and fertility themes and pagan associations with Christmas. Whe shows up selling *sex*, an *XXX* video store selling *sex movies* is visible behind her. And the Sc Café's interior sphere lamps appear again in Sharkey's Café, but in reverse; Bill goes *downs* enter the Sonata where the lamps are down low on the tables and facing upwards, and Bill g *upstairs* to enter Sharkey's where the lamps are up high on the ceiling and facing downward

Call-outs to Kubrick's life and work often come in the form of signs on buildings. The word BOWMAN is visible on one sign, as in Dave Bowman, the protagonist of *2001: A Space Odyss* Another reads VITALI, as in Leon Vitali, Kubrick's longtime assistant and Red Cloak actor. A another sign reads *Caffe da Emilio*, as in Emilio D'Alessandro, Kubrick's chauffeur. And whe enters the hospital through glass doors, behind him the building address across the street one digit away from *The Shining*'s famous hotel room 237.

At Milich's costume store, his teenaged daughter (Leelee Sobieski) whispers into Bill's ear: should have a cloak lined with ermine". Ermine fur was traditionally used for lining cloaks a crowns in coronation ceremonies, so is associated with high-ranking officials and royalty. Milich girl is Bill's fantasy character, then her whispers show his desire to be seen as a man status. In other words, Bill wants women to regard him as a king. In heraldry, a "fur" is an o pattern and colour palette used in the design of crests. An ermine's fur changes colour seas turning all white with black tail tips during winter, so the ermine heraldic fur has a white background with various black shapes, to represent the animal's winter coat. Domino wear fur coat of white with black stripes, and "domino" game tiles are black and white. Ironically a colourful film *Eyes Wide Shut* has many references to "black and white".

Black-and-white title sequences begin and end the film; EYES WIDE SHUT appears in whit
black background at the start, and THE END in white text on black background at the end,
bookending the lushly coloured story within. In their bedroom, Bill says to Alice, "I don't th
quite that black and white"—while he's wearing only black underwear and she's wearing on
underwear. On his night walk, Bill passes the lingerie store *Pink Pussycat Boutique* which h
headless mannequin torsos—a male in black underwear and a female in white underwear—
display window. Bill's imaginings of Alice having sex with the naval officer are in black and
Nick Nightingale plays a piano with black-and-white keys. Nick wears a white suit jacket an
wears a black one. Two mannequins in the Rainbow Costumes display window wear the sa
that Bill and Nick do. The Nathansons' housekeeper Rosa wears a black dress with a white c
Bill wears a black suit with a white collar—both servants to the rich. For most of the movie
dressed in black; on his late night outings he wears a black suit and tie and white shirt, a bl
overcoat, black boots, and black gloves. A skewed film noir antihero (*film noir* meaning "bla
the man in black, descending into the shadow realm.

There are several references to "black and white" in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), such as Bill's imaginings of Alice's fantasy - *Image via* ***The Drunken Odyssey*** *(2019)*

Scenes of Bill in taxicabs at night have cut-out, rear-projected backgrounds whizzing by ou
in old movies—as if he's driving through his own imagined dreamworld. There's the shot of
walking down the street facing the camera, when he smacks his hands together, in which h
to be superimposed in front of the nighttime cityscape background—which is indeed the ca
behind-the-scenes photos show Cruise walking on a treadmill in front of a screen. He look
cutout, and he is, his surroundings visibly manufactured, as if he's not really even there. Sh
this remind us we're watching a movie, as if announcing that it's the Hollywood celebrity T
playing a role. So again, is this film about the sexualization of movie stars, about using sex
movies?

In addition to Yale's relevance to Skull and Bones and the CIA, the Yale students who accost
reminiscent of the *Clockwork Orange* hoodlums. They also represent a younger Bill and Nic
they attended medical school together. Remember how thrilled they are to run into each ot
Ziegler's party after ten years? They enthusiastically hand-shake and back-slap and man-h
immediate college frat bro-like camaraderie and good ol' boy intimacy, as if recalling those

debaucherous days back in college. Bill running into the Yale students is like running into a version of himself, the memory of he and Nick as college students projected onto his enviro

What we hear the Yale guys say before they direct their attention to Bill: "...my face! She had in her mouth. She was doing a Mexican lap dance right in my face. I'm serious. I've got scar back of my neck!" This reflects things that appear onscreen moments before as Bill walks th he passes a *Mexican* Restaurant "Conchita's", which links as well to the cartoon playing on T and Alice's; *The Fright Before Christmas* featuring the Mexican mouse Speedy Gonzalez. The kid sees Bill and says, "Hey, hey, hey, what team's this switch hitter playing for? Looks like t team. Faggot!" Bill had just walked past the "*Pink* Pussycat Boutique"—and also past a flowe named "Nipped in the Bud" with a rose logo on its door sign, and twin *red rose* neon lights, each window on either side of the door.

There are several instances of flower-related imagery in *EWS*. Szavost wears a five-petaled flower pin on his lapel, and Sally's skirt has a five-petaled flower pattern. Nathanson's bedr wallpaper and the Harfords' bedroom curtains have the same fleur-de-lis pattern ("flower lily"). There are potted plants with red flowers in Nathanson's lobby, and red flowers in the Red flowers in vases are visible in the Harfords' apartment, as is a *painting* of red flowers, are painted on their bed's headboard. The rose is a yonic symbol, and Bill's sexual attempts repeatedly "nipped in the bud". The Latin version of the name *Marion* means "rose petal". Ac *Mariana* Hewitt plays the Nathansons' housekeeper *Rosa* (from Spanish, Italian), who links t Harfords' babysitter *Roz* (from Polish). Both Rosa and Roz are in servant roles with names d from the same meaning: rose.

Inside the flower shop are bouquets of red flowers, Christmas lights, and a Santa Claus sta looking out at Bill. Outside, a man and woman are leaning against the store kissing; the ma black, like Bill, and the woman wears a plush white coat and red pants—Santa Claus/Christ colours. The Saint *Nick* statuette overlooking the scene connects with *Nick* Nightingale, and *Nicole* Kidman, who Cruise would often refer to as "Nic" in interviews at the time.

A flower shop called "Nipped in the Bud" in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). Flowers, especially *red* flowers, are a recurring motif. - *Image via* ***idyllopuspress.com*** *(2024)*

After taunting Bill with a few more demeaning remarks and mocking his sexuality, the puni discernible line is "Go back to San Francisco where you belong, man!" Besides the obvious c of San Fran's reputation as an epicenter of gay rights, it also evokes Saint Francis, after wh city is named. Francis was, among other things, associated with birds, and Bill speaks with one "bird", Mr. Nightingale, who whispers a secret in his ear... The homophobic slurs reflect insecurity about his manhood and sexuality, and also refer to Tom Cruise himself and the r rumours popular at the time that he was secretly gay. Alan Cumming's scene as the hotel cl his overt homosexual flirtations with Bill, further invoke the "Tom Cruise is gay" gossip. Ku riddles *EWS* with in-jokes, blurring boundaries between reality and fiction.

There's lots of interesting stuff about that newspaper Bill reads. The article about Amanda states she had modelled for, and was rumoured to have had an affair with, "London fashion Leon Vitali". The real name of the actor who plays Red Cloak is in the fake prop newspaper movie. The diner's name *Gillespie's* means "bishop's servant" (*Celtic Names*, 231). Is Red Cloa bishop and Mandy the servant? Or is Bill the servant? The newspaper article linking Mandy implies she had a relationship with Red Cloak—and we know she had one with Ziegler—hin Red Cloak and Ziegler are conjoined psychological archetypes. The two men are also linked Cloak's red carpet and Ziegler's red pool table. And the masked Mysterious Woman is playe different actress than Mandy, even though it's said to be her. Doubling everywhere.

Fidelio is Beethoven's only opera, and the masquerade ball's password in *EWS*. It's an Italia name meaning "fidelity, faithfulness"—especially sexual faithfulness to a spouse. The opera title was *The Triumph of Married Love*, featuring the female protagonist *Leonore* (in connect *Leon* Vitali, Lisa *Leone*) who disguises herself as a man named *Fidelio* in order to rescue her from a political prison. The name *Leonore* is French for "shining light", appropriate to *EWS*' motif. The mansion's Mysterious Woman who sacrifices herself to save Bill—supposedly Ma mask—is like Leonore risking her life to save her husband by masquerading as Fidelio. Mys Woman and Leonore also identify with Alice who, in her own dream as she recounts it to Bi orgy scenario "fucking all these men". But Alice laughs at Bill in her dream, while in his—if t mansion scene is indeed Bill's dream—she sacrifices herself to save him.

Tom Cruise appears in front of a rear-projected cityscape scene in this shot from *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

BACK
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ROSEMARY & ROMAN

There is so much in *Eyes Wide Shut* that I didn't initially notice, whether in the etymology o character names *and* the actors playing them, the mise-en-scène, colour correspondence, visual and aural cues. But deeper examination opens up a world of parallels that now seem obvious too ignore, to the point I wonder how I ever could've missed them in the first place such example is what may be a Kubrickian reference to the film *Rosemary's Baby*, with the conspicuous appearance of a baby buggy in *EWS*'s toy store scene. The antique-looking str indeed closely resembles the iconic *Rosemary's Baby* carriage from the 1968 movie's poster

Rosemary's Baby is a psychological horror film written and directed by Roman Polanski, sta Farrow. It was adapted from a novel by Ira Levin, who also wrote *The Stepford Wives* (1972), brainwashed housewives, which was likewise adapted into a movie (1975) and later remade starring none other than Nicole Kidman. *Rosemary's Baby* features a bourgeois American co living on Central Park West in Manhattan's Upper West Side—like Bill and Alice—who litera conceive the devil's offspring for a satanic cult in order to secure higher social status. On a side note to *EWS*, the 1993 thriller *The Firm*—directed by Sydney Pollack—also stars a paran Cruise who is in over his head with a seemingly all-powerful cult of sorts.

Like *EWS*, *Rosemary's Baby* involves perception and paranoia and there are times in both fil it feels as if much of what we're seeing is allegorical, projections from the minds of each pr Bill and Rosemary. And both movies explore themes of misogyny, sexual abuse, and the sex autonomy of women. Given the similarities—including with the names *Rose* and *Mary* as de earlier—it's quite possible that *EWS*'s baby carriage is Kubrick's intentional nod to *Rosema* In the 1980 Michel Ciment interview about *The Shining*, he asked Kubrick, "What kind of ho do you like? Did you see *Rosemary's Baby*?" To which Kubrick replied, "It was one of the best genre."

Promotional poster for *Rosemary's Baby* (1968)

A year after *Rosemary's Baby* debuted, Polanski's actress wife Sharon Tate was murdered by of mostly female Charles Manson cult followers who reportedly practised satanic worship. Polanski was scandalized and fled the US to Europe (where he remains in exile to this day) his arrest at age 43 for the rape of a 13-year-old model at Jack Nicholson's house, though Ni wasn't there at the time. Polanski's first film following the incident was *Tess* (1979), adapted Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), about a young peasant girl raped by a nobleman. Soon after, Jack Nicholson starred in Kubrick's *The Shining*, and was previously Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), which is also about, among other things, a rich old man raping daughter.

Themes common in Roman Polanski's life and works parallel those in *EWS*. Rape. Murder. Rich old men preying on very young women. Polanski's later wife, actress Emmanuelle Seig 22 when she married the 55-year-old Polanski. Mia Farrow was married to Frank Sinatra at she was in *Rosemary's Baby*; she was 21 and he was 50 when they wed, and divorced within t Farrow later married filmmaker Woody Allen, only to also divorce him and accuse him of m her adopted daughter Soon-Yi Previn, who Allen later married—when she was 26 and he wa Another adopted daughter of both Farrow and Allen, Dylan Farrow, accused him of molesti when she was 7. Allen was never convicted or sentenced, but was legally denied custody rig in 2013, another of their adopted children, Moses Farrow, announced that he'd been physic assaulted by Mia, and defended Allen. Soon-Yi Previn also publicly defended Allen in 2018. Farrow and Allen's biological children, investigative journalist Ronan Farrow, published art *The New Yorker* in 2017-2018 that exposed sexual assault allegations against movie mogul H Weinstein, CBS executive Les Moonves, and the United States president Donald Trump.

Kubrick was a big fan of Allen's work, particularly *Husbands and Wives* (costarring Sydney P 1992), *Annie Hall* (1977), and *Manhattan* (1979)—a black-and-white comedy about a 42-year-o dating a 17-year-old girl. On a strange side note in connection to *EWS*, Allen's best friend i movie is the character "Yale Pollack". At one point Kubrick considered casting Allen in the l *EWS*, which is also set in Manhattan and features young women with older men. According Stanley's brother-in-law Jan Harlan (who executive-produced Kubrick's last four films, as

and directed the 2001 documentary *Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures*) in a 2014 ***Sight & Sou*** interview:

> Did you know that his (Kubrick's) first contract with Warner Bros. was for *Traumnovelle* in 1970? The film that became *Eyes Wide Shut* almost 30 years later. He postponed it because he wasn't happy with his script and *A Clockwork Orange* came along...Much later, before *The Shining*, he was on cloud nine with the idea of doing *Traumnovelle* as a low-budget arthouse film in black-and-white with Woody Allen in the lead—filming in London and maybe Dublin to mock New York...Woody Allen, straight, as a Jewish doctor in New York: that was his plan. He abandoned it again because he was not satisfied with his script. I am very happy to know that he considered *Eyes Wide Shut* his greatest contribution to the art of filmmaking—and I think he is the only judge that matters.

Manhattan (1979)

There are numerous instances in *EWS* of old men with young women/girls: Sandor Szavost —he's some 25 years older than her. Ziegler and Mandy—he's almost 40 years older than he associates with his daughter—she's 15 and they're in their fifties. And Kubrick directed *Loli* man in his fifties who is obsessed with a 14-year-old girl. A lot surrounding *Rosemary's Bab* readily relates to common Kubrick themes of power and misogyny.

This all gets into *EWS*'s darkest aspects; sexual abuse of women. Remember how the shirtl is still zipping up his pants in front of a passed-out Mandy when Bill enters the room? And inconvenienced and irritated he is when Bill says she should stay there for another hour to from her overdose when Ziegler wants to shuffle her out the backdoor right away? And dar pedophilia and the sexualization of children. The costume store owner Mr. Milich prostitut daughter is the most blatant example. With the Lewis Carroll linkages, it's also mentionabl have been allegations he was a pedophile, having painted nude portraits of female children the Catholic Church's systemic child sexual abuse, religious allusions in *EWS* are also distu relevant. It all invokes conspiracy theories about child trafficking and prostitution rings ru powerful elites, the world's wealthiest criminals. Accounts of the CIA's MKUltra mind contr program describe experiments that involved psychological, physical, and sexual abuse—bu children were used is disputed and controversial.

Eyes Wide Shut is now twenty-years-old, but the serious themes it explores remain relevan time, with the MeToo and Time'sUp movements exposing sexual assault and predation by n high positions of authority. The newspaper article about Mandy states "her agent" notified l security when she didn't answer the phone; is Ziegler her agent, à la Harvey Weinstein? Bill the two women at the party as "models"... This all brings me to another key female characte who I haven't discussed yet: Bill and Alice's daughter Helena Harford.

The first time we see Helena Harford (Madison Eginton) she's wearing a fairy wing costume. Fairy tales and mythology are referenced extensively in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999).

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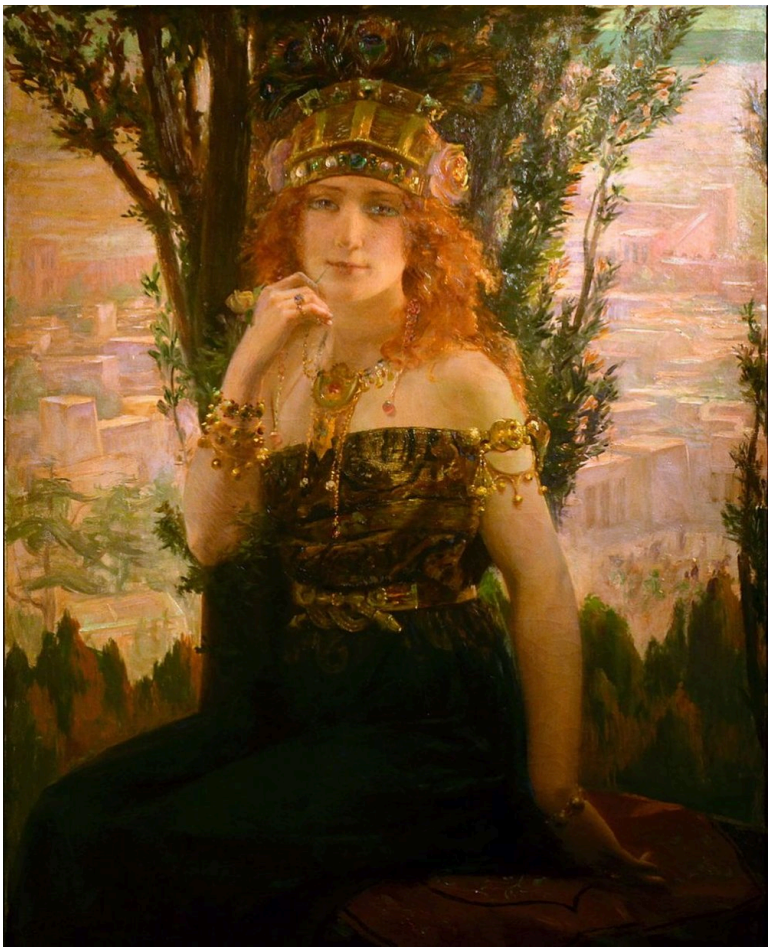
HELENA, MARIE, & MARIE-HÉLÈNE

Helena is a form of *Helen*, of Greek origin, meaning "light" or "shining bright" in fitting with motif in *EWS*—and like *Fidelio's* protagonist *Leonore*, from French meaning "shining light". T *Helena* is most famously from the character *Helen of Troy* in Greek mythology. Considered t beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Troy is said to have "launched a thousand ships", as started wars for her affections. As the story goes, Helen was a queen who left her monarch for a Trojan man named Paris. Some accounts describe it as an elopement, as Helen being love with Paris as he was with her, while other versions describe it as an abduction wherein took Helen against her will (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 119, 193).

Some etymologists link Helen of Troy to "sun goddess" legends, and the story of her elopem abduction by Paris as relating to "marriage drama" myths of ancient Indo-European culture Old Greek spelling of her name has a "v" to possibly represent Venus—the goddess of love, b desire, sex, seduction, fertility—suggesting Helen and Venus share common mythological o they both represent aspects of femininity. This connects again to the eight-pointed Star of and the Astarte painting—the Semitic goddess equivalent to Venus—that appear in *EWS*.

Venus *is* very much involved in Helen of Troy's story; she granted Paris the love of the most woman on Earth, Helen, if he would proclaim that she, Venus, was the most beautiful godde the universe. Paris did so and then ran off with Helen, which started the Trojan War. Dualit displayed again in this story of Helen and Venus—a human woman and a goddess, one the m beautiful on Earth, the other the most beautiful in the Heavens. Themes of twinning and pa prominent in *EWS* are reflected throughout many tales of twinship in Greek mythology. He twin sister Clytemnestra, and they had another pair of half-brother twins named *Gemini*. S of Troy is a pair of pairs, linking to the duality embodied through the character Helena Har has double-H initials, her father is played by an actor whose name means "twin", and there' character named *Illona*—the Hungarian version of *Helena*—the same name.



Helen of Troy (1895) oil painting by Gaston Bussière - *Image via* ***eclecticlight.co*** *(2019)*

Helen of Troy relates to another Greek myth, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, which many mo tales are rooted in. It's been portrayed in various media, from poetry to paintings to popul with Cupid imagery on everything from wallpaper to greeting cards. Cupid is commonly de today as a winged cherub equipped with a bow and arrows—anyone struck by his arrow wil love. In *EWS*, a statue of Cupid and Psyche can be seen at the bottom of the staircase in Zie house, a Cupid card hangs in Domino's apartment, another Cupid card is visible in Bill's of Helena Harford wears a winged fairy costume at the film's opening.

Cupid, meaning "desire", was the Roman god of love, desire, and eroticism. His Greek count *Eros*, which is also a word on a sign behind Bill outside the costume store, and the origin of Cupid was the son of Venus (*Aphrodite*, in Greek)—goddess of love, passion, sex—and Mars of war; an analogy, perhaps, for the extremes of human behaviour; love and war, creation a destruction. *Psyche* is from the Greek for "life" or "breath", with derivative meanings "soul", " and "self". In psychology the *psyche* is the totality of the human mind, conscious and uncons Psyche was a princess of stunning beauty, herself said to be the second coming of Venus. S Cupid's wife, and mother of their daughter *Hedone* (meaning "pleasure", in Greek), also kno *Voluptas* ("pleasure", in Latin) who was herself the goddess of sensual pleasure. The English "hedonism" is derived from Hedone, and "voluptuous" from Voluptas. The themes of *The Ta and Psyche* center on love, lust, sex, and death.

Written in the 2nd century (circa 158-170 A.D.) by Platonist philosopher Lucius Apuleius, *Th Cupid and Psyche* is an episode in his most famous work *Metamorphoses*. The protagonist ar narrator is named *Lucius*, establishing the story's framework through the eyes of a fictiona of the writer Lucius Apuleius himself, which is a little like Bill/Cruise—an actor playing a ch that mocks his real-life image. Most remarkably, just as the mansion scene occurs in the ex middle of *EWS*, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* occurs in the midpoint of the novel *Metamorph* structural mirror of the overarching plot, it's an example of *mise-en-abyme*, a complex narı frame of a story within a story, like *EWS* and its mirror structure endlessly reflecting aspec itself.

The Cupid and Psyche story alludes to "mystery religions" which were a kind of early cult ir "initiates" called *mystai* (mystics). At the end of *Metamorphoses*, the character Lucius finds s by joining the mystery cult of Isis. Lucius Apuleius was himself an initiate of several cults a mystery religions, and was once accused of using magic to seduce a wealthy widow. *Myster* origins in the French *mistere* ("secret, hidden meaning"—and in a theological sense, "hidden significance, religious truth"), Latin *mysterium* ("secret rite, secret worship"), and Greek *mystērion* ("secret doctrine, secret ceremony"). In etymological relation, *mystic* comes from "to shut the eyes and mouth, in secrecy", to be initiated into the "mystery revelation" (*Oxfor Dictionary of English Etymology*, 307). It all sounds similar to what Bill experiences at the se mansion party; before going there he asks Nick, "What's the big mystery?" In this context of ancient initiatory rites of the pagan mysteries, *EWS* is *about* mysteries. And the movie itsel qualify as an *anti*-mystery, because nothing is answered with certainty.

Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss (1793) sculpture by Antonio Canova - *Image via* **metmuseum.org** *(2019)*

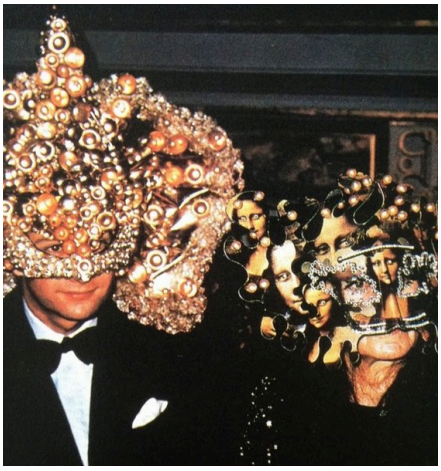
Dated about 150 years before Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is another classic Latin literary work entitled *Metamorphoses* (8 A.D.) by Roman poet Ovid. Considered his masterwork, it's an ep narrative poem of 250 myths. At Ziegler's party, Sandor Szavost attempts to seduce Alice by

Ovid's *The Art of Love*. When she tells him she's married, he replies that in ancient times w
married because it was the only way to be free to sleep with other men. Really? I thought le
marriage evolved as a property contract for men to secure their wealth succession and line
having women bear them offspring. The word "woman" in fact comes from the Old English
from **w**ife **o**f **man** (*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 544). Two ancient books connecte
—a movie with mirroring and duality themes—have identical titles: *Metamorphoses* and
Metamorphoses. Coincidentally, the famous story ***The Metamorphosis*** was written by Franz K
whose work Kubrick adored. A contemporary of Arthur Schnitzler, Sigmund Freud, and Ca
Kafka (born 1883) shares a birthday with Tom Cruise—July 3rd (1962). Bill undergoes a meta
of sorts, doesn't he?

Helena plays with the baby buggy in the toyshop, and a baby stroller is visible on the landin
Domino's building, seemingly abandoned in the corner outside of her apartment—which li
and Domino. Also in the toy store, tiger stuffies fill a shelf behind Alice—of the same sort a
on Domino's bed, linking the two of them. This all invokes the possibility that not only is D
some kind of alternate version of Bill's wife Alice, but also of his daughter Helena; the same
characters transposed in alternate, imagined timelines. And Domino's roommate Sally rese
what Helena might look like in twenty years or so, with their freckles and red hair. Is this p
part of Bill's sexual hesitancy with Domino, and Sally? Maybe they represent a future Helen
possible fate that Bill has been complicit in by his unconscious contribution to capitalism a
misogyny. Milich prostituting his young daughter is another version. And Ziegler's wife is n
Illona, an alternate *Helena*. Domino is a prostitute, and Illona is the wife of a super-rich gu
routinely has sex with prostitutes. And Helena is the daughter of Bill, a somewhat rich guy
thinks he wants to have sex with prostitutes, but doesn't.

In further connection to Helen/Helena, *and* to Marie/Marion: Marie-Hélène de Rothschild
wealthy socialite and member of the Rothschild family, who died in 1996 around the time *E*
early stages of production. Her paternal grandmother was Baroness *Hélène* de Rothschild.
notable Rothschild reference in *EWS* is that the UK's Mentmore Towers, which serves as th
Somerton mansion, was built in the 1850s by the son of Nathan Rothschild. Bill's patient is
Nathanson. The Rothschilds' extravagant parties have been documented, including a masqu
that Marie-Hélène held at another Rothschild mansion called Château de Ferrières, in Fra
built just after Mentmore for another family member—Baron James de Rothschild—who, u
his cousin's impressive mansion told the architect, "Build me a Mentmore, but twice the siz
Rothschilds: A Family of Fortune). Marie-Hélène took over the mansion in 1959, refurbished
soon became the epicenter for European high society, with visitors including everyone fro
to Hollywood celebrities.

Marie-Hélène's party was called the "Surrealist Ball", and while it wasn't a massive sex orgy
not as popularly reported), it does have numerous eerie parallels to *EWS* too similar to be i
was held on December 12th, 1972—the Christmas season. The invitations were printed back
only legible if held up to a mirror; backwards text and inversion of traditional symbols are
occult practises. When Bill enters the mansion, the music composition heard is "Backward
a Romanian Orthodox liturgy played in reverse. Marie-Hélène's party guests were required
in costumes and masks with a surrealist theme—one of the *EWS* party attendees wears a C
mask. The ball also had food served on the body of a life-sized mannequin lying down—per
inspired by the nude mannequin tables in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, which had come o
earlier?



Among the notable celebrities in attendance were Surrealist artist Salvador Dali, movie sta
Hepburn, and model-turned-actress Marisa Berenson, who a few years later starred in Kub
Barry Lyndon (1975)—another movie about wealthy elites. In a 1974 *New York Times* interview
said "I was once one of the highest paid models in the world" ("About New York", with John C
attendance at the ball resonates as an ominous foreshadowing of *EWS*. By 1972 Kubrick had
the rights to *Traumnovelle* and was already researching for it, so perhaps he talked to Berer
Marie-Hélène's ball. At that time Kubrick was among the world's most famous filmmakers,
he'd even attended such similar parties.

Another peripheral link to the name *Helen* is that actress *Helen* Mirren starred in *2010: The*
Make Contact (1984)—the sequel to *2001*. Her character is *Tanya Kirbuk*, an obvious homage
Kubrick as an aural anagram and near-exact reversal in spelling of his surname. *2010* was a
writer-director Peter Hyams from *2001* author Arthur C. Clarke's 1982 sequel novel. Kubric
involved, but Hyams got his and Clarke's blessing to make the film. In addition to the Mirre
character's name (which is different in Clarke's book), Hyams pays tribute to *2001* by featur
in a cameo sitting on a park bench. And a fake *Time* magazine about US-Soviet tensions app
the film, with a cover picture of Clarke as the US President and Kubrick as the Soviet Prem
Mirren was born on July 26th (1945)—the same birthday as Stanley Kubrick (1928), which is t
birthday as Leon Vitali as Red Cloak (1948), and also the same birthday as Peter Hyams (194
Mr. Milich is played by Rade Šerbedžija, whose birthday is July 27th (1946)—one day after Ku
al. These birthday coincidences are another example of the seemingly infinite expanse of th
multiverse.

The *Hélène* part of *Marie-Hélène* relates to: Helena Harford, Illona, Helen of Troy, Helen Mi
Rothschild family, Mentmore Towers, the Surrealist Ball, Marisa Berenson, *Barry Lyndon*. A
Marie part of *Marie-Hélène* relates to: *Marie* Richardson as *Marion*, Tom Cruise's sister's na

Marian, his mother's name *Mary*, Nicole Kidman's middle name *Mary*, the Yale punks taunt Christmas, *Mary*", and actress *Mariana* Hewitt as the housekeeper *Rosa*, which connects to babysitter *Roz*, which means *rose*, which all connect to the name *Rose-Mary* through the *Ro Baby* carriage appearance. Such cross-connections between names and associated substor exemplify the scope of Kubrick's artistic vision.

The UK's Mentmore Towers serves as the Somerton mansion in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

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SABRINA & COMUS (A MASQUE)

In the toy store, Helena says to her parents, "I can put Sabrina in here" as she gestures to th antique-looking *Rosemary's Baby* carriage—ostensibly referring to a doll of hers. Alice repli old-fashioned." Did Kubrick have a reason for using that particular name, and if so then wh *Sabrina* signify in this context?

Sabrina is a water nymph character with origins in English and Greek mythology. Her story Helen of Troy's, as Sabrina is said to descend from Brutus of Troy and the Trojan War hero who is also a son of Venus and cousin of Paris. In English legend, Sabrina was a girl born to mistress of King Locrine. He acknowledged Sabrina and her mother and rejected his wife Gwendolen, who then waged war against him and won—killing Locrine in battle and orderi Sabrina and her mother be drowned in the Welsh-English River Severn. *Severn* comes from Welsh *Habren*, which the Romans translated as *Sabrina* (*Dictionary of First Names*, 239). Vari versions of the story conclude with Sabrina being saved by the river nymphs and becoming herself. Nymphs, or *Naiads*, are beautiful female spirits who preside over rivers, lakes, and bodies of water.

Sabrina is a key character in a masque by English poet John Milton, entitled *Comus (A Masq Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634)*, announced as a masque to honour chastity. Masques were ancient form of live, theatrical entertainment and pageantry, a popular court celebration w singing, dancing and mask-wearing—with the main parts often played by nobles and royals themselves. The etymology of the French word *masque* is directly linked to *mask* and *masqu* from the Italian *mascara* and the Latin *masca* meaning "witch" and "specter", and the Arabic meaning "buffoon" (*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 283). Note the thematic relevanc word *masque* to *EWS* and the word *masquerade* as commonly used today; *masc*ara is makeu *eyes*, with supernatural connotations (as in Halloween makeup), clownish purposes, or sexu implications—disguising oneself to attract, shock, or entertain.

Sabrina and Her Nymphs (1841) painting by William Etty - *Image via* ***artuk.org*** *(2019)*

Comus is the Greek god of excess, festivity, indulgence, and nocturnal dalliances (*Dictionar Classical Mythology*, 68). The story of *Comus* concerns a woman, *The Lady*, who Comus captu brings to his pleasure palace where he attempts to coerce her into sexual debauchery. He a tries to drug her, and put spells on her with his necromancy—reminiscent of Ziegler and th overdosed Mandy. But The Lady holds strong against Comus until she is eventually saved a by the nymph Sabrina. *Comus* concludes with an allusion to *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, d further interconnections between *EWS* and other stories, with elements of each correspon the others.

The moment Helena mentions Sabrina, a woman passes behind her and glances over. Look unlike a witch, she wears pointed black boots and a long dark fur overcoat with its hood up cloaked masked ball attendees. *Sabrina* comes to mind as the name of the teenage witch fr *Archie* comic book series (by George Gladir and Dan DeCarlo), linking, however loosely, to *I* Wiccan and witchcraft-related imagery. Immediately prior to *EWS*, Nicole Kidman starred fantasy-comedy *Practical Magic* (1998), playing sister to costar Sandra Bullock's character a magic-slinging modern-day witches (Bullock's birthday is also July 26th, 1964; the same as 1928).

Helena plays with the *Rosemary's Baby* carriage as a witchlike woman walks by—further aug *EWS* associations with the supernatural, fairy tales, *and* horror/thriller cinema, as Roman

directed a number of other features in the genre, particularly *psychological* horror. *Repulsio* stars Catherine Deneuve as a woman whose increasing repulsion to men and their sexual a drives her to murder. And *The Tenant* (1976) stars Polanski himself as a man tormented by h group of neighbours. Polanski's wife, actress Sharon Tate, was murdered in 1969 by female she had starred in his 1967 film *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, the supernatural horror *Eye of* (1966) as a witch, and *Valley of the Dolls* (1967)—a critically reviled melodrama about the mis of three women in the entertainment industry. Polanski's first film after Tate's death was a graphically violent adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1971), which famously features *The Witches* characters.

Sabrina is also the title character of a 1954 film starring Audrey Hepburn—who would atten Rothschild Surrealist Ball—and directed by Billy Wilder, whom Kubrick admired. *Sabrina* w in 1995 starring Harrison Ford (Harford) and directed by Sydney Pollack (Ziegler).

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CARLOTTA & GISELLE

A stack of boxes in the toyshop bear a picture of a girl doll pushing a miniature toy baby ca and the name "Carlotta Junior". This parallels what happens a moment earlier in the same s girl, Helena, with her hands on the push handle of a baby carriage, reflected in the picture box. What does the name *Carlotta* signify here? Etymologically, *Carlotta* is the Italian femin of "freeman" (i.e. "freewoman") or "free peasant"; Helena is Carlotta Junior, daughter of a fre *Carlotta* and *Charlotte* are the female variants of *Carl* and *Charles* (*Dictionary of First Names* yes we do have a Carl in *Eyes Wide Shut*. The etymology of his name "Carl Thomas" translate Mason". So who is Carl(otta) Junior? The future unborn child of Carl and Marion? Perhaps s duplicate, dream-toy-doll version of Helena, reproduced and sold in a store in boxes upon like a house of mirrors.

When exploring peripheral *Carlotta* links, deeper meaning emerges. Carlotta Grisi was a fa 19th-century Italian ballerina most known for the romantic ballet *Giselle*, in her "greatest r title character. *Giselle* tells the story of a young peasant girl who dies of heartbreak when a disguised nobleman betrays her love. She's summoned back to life by supernatural female l spirits of virgin girls who exact revenge on abusive men by dancing them to death. *Giselle* r tale of *Sabrina and Comus*, which also has female spirits assisting women who are wronged *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, about a peasant girl abused by a wealthy nobleman, and *Fidelio*, abo woman in disguise.

The name *Giselle* is from the German *gisil*, meaning "to owe, a pledge". In the Middle Ages it customary for rival factions to offer a person, often a child, to each other as a pledge of pea (*Dictionary of First Names*, 111)—as in *Rosemary's Baby*, and also like Mysterious Woman in *E* offers to sacrifice herself to save Bill. Is *she* then like Giselle, and Bill the disguised noblem Ziegler the deceitful nobleman, and Giselle is Mandy, the peasant girl? Carlotta Grisi had tv daughters (*Marie* and *Léontine*), one by her dancing partner and one by Prince *Leon* Radziw

Helena is alternately Carlotta Junior, a princess—or Giselle Junior, the daughter of a heartb
woman turned spirit avenger.

1841 lithograph of ballerina Carlotta Grisi in the title role of *Giselle* (artist unknown)

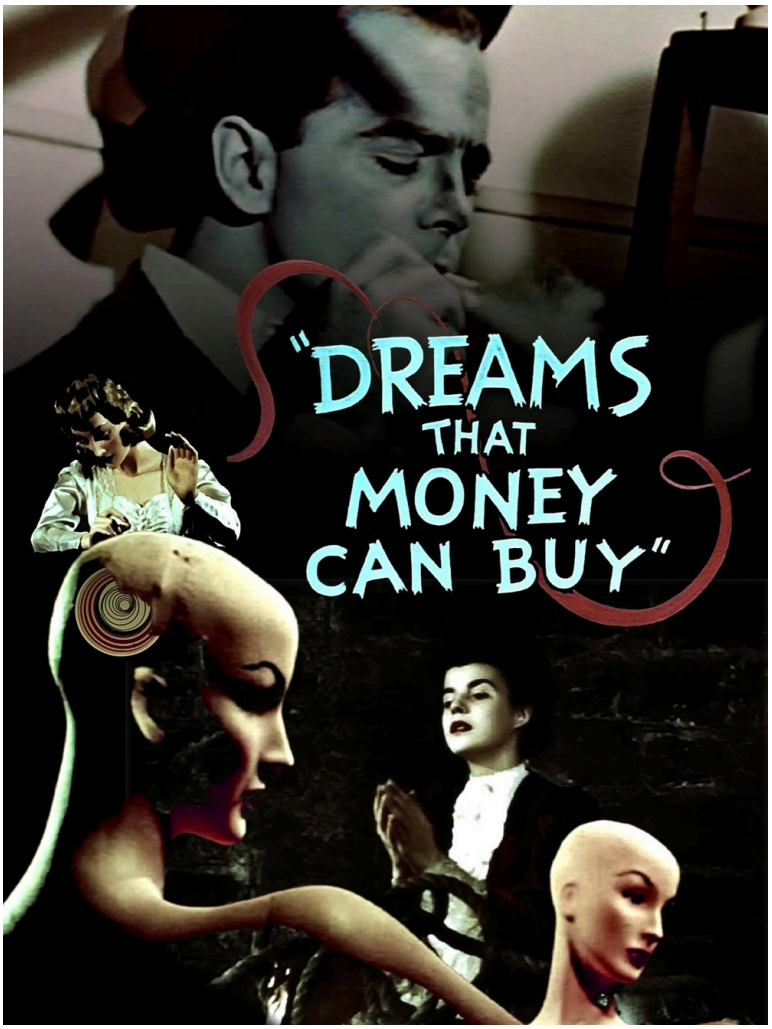
Kubrick knew about things like ballet, Carlotta Grisi, and *Giselle*. His second wife Ruth Sobo
ballerina, dancer, choreographer, art director, and actress. She appeared as the ballerina c
Iris in Kubrick's first official feature film *Killer's Kiss* (1955), as well as serving as art directo
she did again on Kubrick's next movie *The Killing*, 1956). *Iris* is the Greek goddess of the *rai*
Sobotka was the Austrian-born daughter of immigrants; her mother was a Viennese actress
Gisella, and Kubrick scholars speculate that it was likely Ruth who introduced Stanley to Au
literature, including Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*.

Among numerous credits to her name, Ruth Sobotka appeared in *The Nutcracker* (in 1954, w
and Stanley were together) which Helena mentions at the beginning of *EWS*, and as the cha
"Charlotta" in a 1962 production of Anton Chekhov's last play *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). The
dramatizes socioeconomic forces in Russia at the turn of the century, including the abolitio
serfdom, rise of the middle class, and decline of the aristocracy, and has been described as
dual nature with alternately tragic and comedic elements. The character Charlotta is a gove
like Helena's babysitter Roz, and like Carlotta the girl doll is governess to the baby doll Carl
Junior in the toyshop.

Ruth Sobotka's first appearance as a movie actress was in the experimental ***Dreams That M Buy*** (1947), widely recognized as the first feature-length avant-garde art film—with a title th to *Eyes Wide Shut*'s storyline. Hans Richter is credited as the movie's producer, co-director writer, which is comprised of seven surreal, dream sequence shorts. Each segment was wri directed by a prominent Dadaist or Surrealist artist of the day, including Man Ray, Max Ern Duchamp, and Richter. Dadaism was an early-20th-century art movement that employed c sound-poetry, cut-up writing, and found object art, with links to Cubism, abstract art, and movements. Dadaists believed in anti-bourgeois protest through art; rejecting capitalist aestheticism, mocking social conventions, and emphasizing the illogical and absurd.

Dreams That Money Can Buy tells the story of a man who can see his own dreams while look his eyes in the mirror, then sets up a business selling actual dreams—the contents of which similarities to *EWS*; there's a young couple, a blind man, a mask, mirrors, mannequins, toy that come to life, and many close-up shots of *eyes*. Ruth Sobotka appears as "The Girl" in Ma segment "Ruth, Roses and Revolvers". Note the *Roses* in the title in relation to *EWS* imagery, metacinematic use of *Ruth* the actress *and* character's name (like Jack Nicholson as "Jack" a Lloyd as "Danny" in *The Shining*).

Knowing Kubrick's reputation as a completist and that his second wife acted in *Dreams Tha Can Buy*, one would assume he saw the movie and its conceptual parallels to *EWS* are no ac But it goes even further; Stanley Kubrick himself is actually *in* the film. An uncredited nine year-old Stanley appears briefly as an extra, visible a few times in an intermittent series of from around 34:55–37:35 of *Dreams That Money Can Buy*. He's sitting next to his then-girlfrie soon-to-be first wife Toba Metz, both of them audience members at a screening of an avan film within the film, in the very scene featuring his future second wife Ruth Sobotka. Stanle Ruth married in 1955 and divorced in 1957, and she died ten years later at age 41, on June 17t three days before Nicole Kidman was born on June 20th, 1967.



Dreams That Money Can Buy (1947) is widely considered the first feature-length abstract art film, featuring Stanley Kubrick's second wife Ruth Sobotka in a minor role, and young Stanley himself as an extra - *Image via nitehawkcinema.com (2019)*

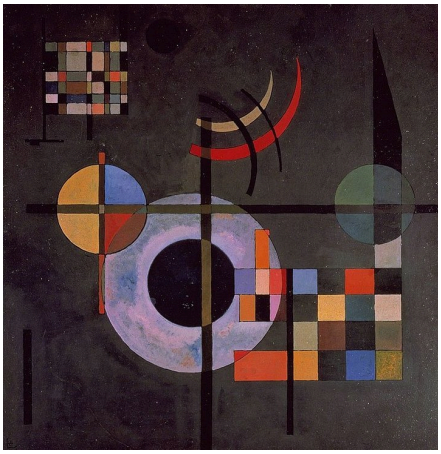
There are further references to avant-garde art/artists in *EWS*, and to visual art in general. on a bulletin board outside Domino's apartment reads FOR SALE: KEITH HARING PAINTIN was a New York graffiti artist who died of AIDS, and when Bill returns to Domino's her roor Sally tells him Domino is HIV positive. On a related note, when Bill is looking for Nick, the waitress tells him Nick's hotel name—implying she slept with him—but only after Bill lies a having important blood test results, suggesting a sexually transmitted disease. Also on the board is an ad for "Body Oriented Psychotherapy", in fitting with the film's psychosexual th

Bill leaves the hospital morgue and walks down a hallway bizarrely adorned with abstract p as if a Surrealist art gallery—recalling his apartment hallway likewise filled with colourful p (by Stanley's wife Christiane). Alice is a former art gallerist, who we see wrapping a Vincent art book as a Christmas gift for Bill. At the Nathansons', as the housekeeper Rosa moves fro room to the next, a Mark Rothko painting is panned over quickly. Rothko was a Jewish, New based abstract artist who, like Van Gogh, died by suicide. Also appearing briefly, on the wal elevator to Bill's medical office, is the painting "Counter Weights" (1926) by Russian artist W. Kandinsky. A pioneer of abstract art and Expressionism, Kandinsky cofounded the artist n

Blaue Reiter (*The Blue Rider*), which included German painter August Macke, whose paintin into a Lane" (1914) hangs in Bill's medical office waiting room.

Victor Ziegler is mentioned as having a valuable art collection, and Adolf Ziegler was the re Nazi official in charge of confiscating "degenerate art". Among the thousands of Nazi-lootec were numerous paintings by Kandinsky and Van Gogh. Other *EWS* art references include o portraits of nobles in Victor's billiard room, a Cupid and Psyche statue in his foyer, numerc at Somerton, Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* in Sharkey's, and perhaps most subtly, a small poste words "I ❤️ ART" on the Harfords' fridge.

The painting "Counter Weights" appears briefly in *Eyes Wide Shut*, on the wall of the elevator to Bill's office.



"Counter Weights" (1926), by Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky, is one of many visual art pieces in *Eyes Wide Shut* - *Image via* ***Wikimedia*** *(2024)*

The classic Gothic novel *The Phantom of the Opera* (*Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*) by Gaston Leroux and subsequent adaptations, features a character named *Carlotta*. She's the prima donna o Opera House, in another story that bears noteworthy similarities to *EWS*; The Phantom cha would've fit right in unnoticed at the mansion costume party, for starters. The narrative als includes a masquerade ball, a mirrored room, and again recalls *Giselle*'s deceitful noblemar villainous title character, and *Fidelio*'s disguised protagonist. *The Phantom of the Opera* is a tale about a masked, cloaked figure who is out of place in high society, like Bill, and also ide with Red Cloak, as The Phantom is usually depicted wearing a red cloak or cape.

Kubrick liked ghost stories—*phantoms*—as in *The Shining*. The word "phantom" links etymo to "fantasy" and "phantasy" (*fantasie*, *phantasia*, *phantasma*, from Old French, Latin, Greek), "sensuous perception", "delusive imagination", and/or "illusion" (*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 196, 349). The word "fantasy" today refers to either a make-believe magical world fairy tale, *or* an imagined, desired sexual encounter. *Eyes Wide Shut* is both; Helena is the n Most Beautiful Woman in the World, Sabrina is a water nymph, Giselle a spirit fairy being, V the Roman Goddess of Love/Sex/Desire, Astarte her Semitic counterpart, her fairy son Cup the God of Romantic Love, *his* wife Psyche the Goddess of the Soul, with butterfly wings. Ar Like the various *EWS* characters; Bill's phantoms, haunting him.

But perhaps the most most notable connection to "Carlotta Junior" is that *Charlotte* is the n Lolita's mother in Nabakov's book *Lolita* (1955) and, as played by Shelley Winters, in Kubrick adaptation. So, Carlotta Junior is, then, Lolita. And *Lolita* is a diminutive of *Dolores*, which r

"sorrowful, suffering" in Spanish (*Random House Spanish-English Dictionary*, 26). A *sad* girl, contrasted by *Carlotta*, a *free* woman.

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SHADOWS, WINDOWS, & TELEVISION SCREEN

When Bill is in Domino's bedroom, his cellphone rings. He puts his finger to his lips motion her to be quiet, walks to the side of the room, and answers his phone. Cut to Alice sitting al kitchen table in their apartment, beside a television. She asks Bill how much longer he will lies to her, saying he's still at the Nathansons'. The movie playing on the TV is *Blume in Love* particularly relevant as it is about a divorce lawyer whose wife divorces him after catching cheating. The movie's tagline *A Love Story for Guys Who Cheat On Their Wives* could functio subtitle for *Eyes Wide Shut*, too. Although Bill doesn't fully cheat, so his tagline would more accurately be *A Love Story for Guys Who ALMOST Cheat On Their Wives*.

Blume in Love (1973) is written and directed by Paul Mazursky, an early Kubrick collaborato becoming a writer-director himself, Mazursky appeared as an actor in Kubrick's first featu *Fear and Desire* (1953)—a title that also applies to Bill Harford. An antiwar film, *Fear and Des* displays early warning signs of what later become common themes throughout Kubrick's filmography; Mazursky plays *Sidney*, a soldier who kills a local peasant girl while stranded i territory. The movie disappeared after limited distribution because Kubrick was unhappy v discouraged its rerelease, so *Killer's Kiss* was long considered Kubrick's first *official* feature film—until *Fear and Desire* was finally released on DVD and Blu-ray in 2012.

Cruise as Bill Harford in *Eyes Wide Shut*. Part of his reflection and half of a mask is visible in a mirror—a book under the mirror is entitled *Shadows on the Mirror*.

The scene cuts back and forth between Bill at Domino's and Alice at home. Bill stands in Dc bedroom beside a mirror on the right side of the screen. A fragment of his reflection is visi mirror, as is half of a mask that hangs on Domino's opposite wall. Behind him is a window v partially drawn Venetian blinds. Seen a moment earlier but now out of frame was Domino's television, turned off. We also just saw another mirror on Domino's wall opposite the one B standing beside. Alice sits at the table with the television on the right side of the screen, an her are glass cupboard doors, like a window. Alice's reflection flickers faintly on the TV scr is reflected on the cupboard window behind her. A reflection of a reflection of a shadow on Back to Bill, where visible directly under the mirror is a book entitled *Shadows on the Mirro* television screen and mirror function as windows between the characters' environments, g positioned in the same place in relation to Bill and Alice in their respective surroundings.

A husband, attempting to cheat on his wife, talks to her on the telephone while he's positior a mirror. The wife talks to her husband on the telephone while she's positioned beside a tel which is playing a movie about a man trying to win his wife back after cheating on her. And movie is made by Kubrick collaborator Paul Mazursky, and features another actor Kubrick with—*Lolita*'s Shelley Winters. *Blume in Love* alludes to *Lolita*, which is perhaps at least in p Mazursky cast Winters, and is yet another example of how mediums of expression and communication in *EWS* (telephones, notes, television screens, paintings) function as messa the audience, right there for all of us to see even if at first we don't. Eyes wide shut.

Blume in Love has mirroring and duality themes of its own. Parts of the story take place in ' Italy, and parts in Venice, California. *EWS* links to Venice, Italy—a historic merchant hub—i traditional Venetian masks. Thomas Mann's novel *Death in Venice* (1912) is about a man in hi who travels to Venice and becomes increasingly obsessed with a fourteen-year-old boy he there. So, while originally published over forty years earlier, *Death in Venice* has obvious sir to *Lolita*. Thomas Mann was, like his contemporary Arthur Schnitzler, influenced by Sigmu and his views on dreams; Schnitzler was indeed regarded by Freud as his literary doppelgä

Kidman as Alice Harford in *Eyes Wide Shut*; her television plays a movie about a cheating husband, while she talks on the phone to her husband who is attempting to cheat.

The particular *Blume in Love* scene that's shown in *EWS* is relevant too, as Juli Kearns obse her shot-by-shot analysis: "The camera pans right over a young blond man who had been e earlier...by a much older man...and had spurned his glance, the scene an obvious reference *in Venice* in which a composer goes to Venice and falls in love with a preteen boy...Unlike *La* however, nothing happens between the pair in *Death in Venice*"—like nothing happens betw and any of his sexual prospects. Kubrick provides commentary about *EWS* within the film i through the *Blume in Love* scene showing characters alluding to *Death in Venice*, which con *Lolita*, and back to Kubrick. With all its links to other creative works, *EWS* resonates on a m level. Movies within movies, stories within stories. The *Death in Venice* protagonist visits a city called "the Lido"; the same area that hosts the Venice Film Festival—the oldest, and one biggest (next to Cannes and Berlin) film festivals in the world—where *Eyes Wide Shut* made European debut.

Mazursky himself plays a role in *Blume in Love*, as a character named *Hellman*, recalling *EV* Cloak. Alice sits at the kitchen table smoking a cigarette, with a glass of milk and a box of "SnackWell's *Devil's Food* Cookie Cakes" laid out in front of her. Earlier, Alice and Helena sit of the TV that plays a cartoon; *The Fright Before Christmas*—a segment from 1979's *Bugs Bun Looney Christmas Tales*—featuring the Tasmanian *Devil* drinking milk and eating devil's foo (like Alice), masquerading in costume (like Bill), and much Christmas imagery.

One visible book title in Domino's apartment is *Introducing Sociology* (1996), a real introduct textbook for university sociology students. Sociology is the study of human behaviour, and human spheres of activity are affected by intersecting influences of economic class stratifi political systems, laws, religion, sexuality, gender, etc. Film analyst Tim Kreider borrowed title *Introducing Sociology* for his *EWS* essay, wherein he makes more compelling observatio other book on Domino's shelf, *Shadows on the Mirror*, is below a mirror. Kearns describes it of thriller about a female lawyer whose husband was unfaithful, then when widowed she go having brief affairs with men, restoring their confidence...But one 'vicious misogynist' of a stalks her, and 'keeps her under surveillance as a possible replacement for his missing wife

Blume in Love (1973)

Kearns also notes that Chris Isaak's "Baby did a Bad Bad Thing"—a song featured in *EWS*—i
"the album *Forever Blue* which also has the song 'Shadows in a Mirror'. The lyrics have two l
have split up, one hoping that they will get together again, but the shadows in a mirror tell
person they're wrong and that they are instead finished" (Kearns). The shadow motif also c
Helena through the movie adaptation of the Greek myth, *Helen of Troy* (1956), in which Paris
mistakes Helen for her beautiful slave, so she poses as such and "speaks of herself as Helen
'shadow'. The movie continues with the idea of dual personas for both Paris and Helen" (Ke
Helen of Troy is played by actress Rossanna Podestà, who has the same birthday as Nicole K
(June 20th, 1934 and 1967, respectively).

The shadow theme also links to the book Helena reads at bedtime: "I have a little shadow th
and out with me, and what can be the use of him is more than I can see. He is very, very lik
the heels up to the head, *and I see him jump before me when I jump into my bed*". Eerily this p
excerpt has vaguely sexual connotations in this context, as Alice is reading along and encou
Helena, getting particularly gleeful when Helena reads the end, as Bill looks on silently. It n
differently if the poem's pronoun was *she/her*. But here it's as if Alice is coaching her daugh
what her own idea of a woman is; a counterpart to a man, as in another scene where Alice h
Helena with math homework calculating how much money boys have. The poem is "My Sha

Robert Louis Stevenson, whose most famous work is the Gothic novella *Strange Case of Dr. Mr. Hyde*—another tale that explores the dual nature, the light and dark sides, of man.

Helena (Madison Eginton) reads Robert Louis Stevenson's poem "My Shadow" in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

In *Full Metal Jacket*, when a colonel asks Private Joker why he wears a peace sign on his boc yet has "Born to Kill" written on his combat helmet, Joker replies, "I was trying to suggest sc about the duality of man. The Jungian thing." Carl Jung was a one-time Freud collaborator, psychoanalyst whose *shadow* theory relates to Freud's ideas about the id. In Jungian psycho "shadow" is a person's unknown dark side, personifying "everything that the subject refuses acknowledge about himself" (Jung, ***Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious***, 284). Instincti irrational, and prone to psychological projections, the shadow embodies unconscious, sexu impulses that often appear in dreams and visions. Jung says that when "an individual makes attempt to see his shadow, he becomes aware of (and often ashamed of) those qualities and he denies in himself...such things as egotism...unreal fantasies, schemes, and plots; careles cowardice; inordinate love of money and possessions" (Jung, ***Man and his Symbols***, 174-175).

In relation to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Jung says "it must be Jekyll, the conscious personality integrates the shadow...and *not* vice versa. Otherwise the conscious becomes the slave of th autonomous shadow" (***Archetypes***, 123). As the process of integration continues, "the libido l bright upper world...sinks back into its own depths...below, in the shadows of the unconscious" (***Psychology of the Unconscious***, 181-182) and emerging to the forefront is "what hidden under the mask...the shadow" (***Psychology***, 238-239). There's been a lot of talk about Freudian, but Jung's descriptions of the "shadow" apply stunningly well to *EWS*. Note the ch Carl...another of Bill's shadow projections, pointing us to *Carl* Jung? Coincidentally, Carl Ju a birthday with Stanley Kubrick, July 26th (1875 and 1928, respectively).

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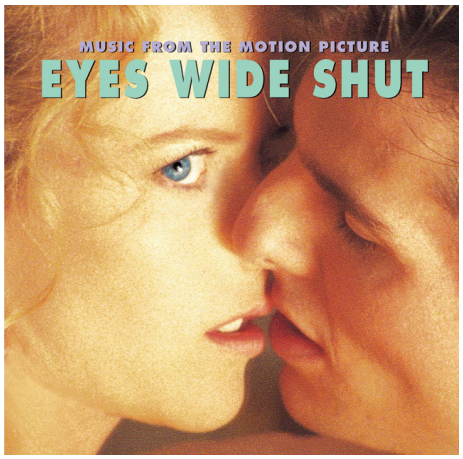
THE MUSIC: BABY DID A BAD BAD THING

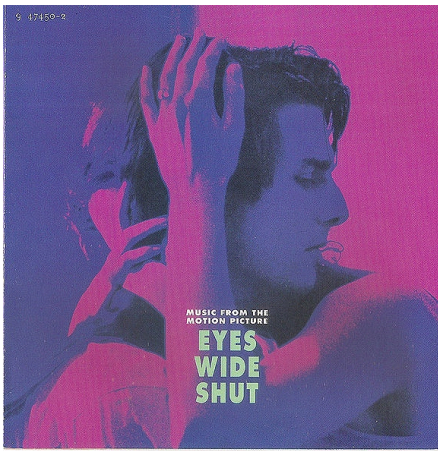
Among Stanley Kubrick's contributions to the cinematic arts, he was noted for his effective music—most famously for the 1896 composition "Also Sprach Zarathustra" by Richard Strau *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Eyes Wide Shut's soundtrack is comprised almost exclusively of orchestral instrumental mu Contemporary composer Jocelyn Pook recorded four pieces for the score, mostly based on previous compositions; the masked ball features a reworked version of Pook's "Backwards l which contains a Romanian Orthodox divine liturgy played backwards (retitled as "Masked Pook's "Migrations"—a haunting piece based on a Tamil song—plays during the orgy.

The movie's opening and closing theme is "Waltz No. 2" from "Suite for Variety Stage Orches Dmitri Shostakovich, which also recurs throughout. The waltz carries the start of the film t opening credits and into the action, where Bill then goes to the stereo and turns the music breaks the line between nondiegetic and diegetic worlds, as the music existing outside of tl before it even begins, enters the fictional universe and is controlled by the character withi classical music compositions include a section from Mozart's *Requiem*, "Rex Tremendae", w in Sharkey's as Bill reads of Mandy's overdose. Soon after, he discovers she's died; a requie religious musical composition to lay the souls of the dead to rest. And "Grey Clouds", by 19tl Hungarian composer Franz Lizst, plays during the morgue scene.

The soundtrack's one vocal number is Chris Isaak's "Baby Did a Bad Bad Thing". To help Kid during nude scene rehearsals Kubrick encouraged her to play her own choice of music, wh included Isaak's 1995 album *Forever Blue* (appropriate given all the blue light in *EWS*) with t on it—and Kubrick decided to use it. Not on the official soundtrack but featured in the mov Gillespie's diner, is The Dell-Vetts' "I Want a Boy for Christmas". The Oscar Peterson Trio's j instrumental "I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good)" plays while Bill is in Domino's bedroom, a another instance of breaking diegesis—he walks over to her stereo and turns the music off. songs are used in ironic ways; "When I Fall in Love" and "It Had to be You" are played by the Ziegler's party while Bill and Alice flirt with other people. And an instrumental arrangemer "Strangers in the Night" plays at the mansion's ballroom dance scene; vocal versions of the feature lyrics satirically relevant to *EWS*, such as "something in your *eyes* was so inviting".





One of the most prominent pieces of music in *EWS* is a recurring, haunting four-note pian from "Musica Recircata (2nd movement)" by György Ligeti (written circa 1950). Ligeti was a Hungarian-Austrian composer, born in Transylvania, Romania—like where Dracula lived. A party, the mysterious older man who Alice dances with introduces himself as Sandor Szavo I thought this might be a reference to Anton Szandor LaVey, the founder and High Priest of Church of Satan. Szavost's presence as a sleazy older European man who hits on Alice serv reminder that she and Bill are partying with people tied to an upper-echelon satanic cult. I *Dracula*-esque qualities with his creepy attempts at seducing Alice, Szavost says "I'm Hung because Romanian would be too on-the-nose of a comparison, and Kubrick rarely gives it straight. But Szavost is certainly reminiscent of the bloodsucking count and his seductive p

But more interconnected details surface with the discovery that György Ligeti's parents we *Sándor* Ligeti and Dr. *Ilona* Ligeti, like the *EWS* characters *Sandor* and *Illona* (spelled with t "L"), which of course translates to *Helena*. And György Ligeti himself also has the middle na Sándor, after his father.

Kubrick used Ligeti's music in three of his films: *2001* has excerpts of four Ligeti pieces, *Th* uses portions of one Ligeti piece, and *EWS* repeats that one segment from Ligeti's "Musica at key moments. The composition has been associated with freedom of expression, written protest against fascism; most of Ligeti's family was killed by the Nazis in World War II. At th premier of *EWS*, Ligeti accompanied Kubrick's widow Christiane, whose uncle was a Nazi propagandist.

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STANLEY KUBRICK IS IN THE MOVIE

Stanley Kubrick died within a week of showing the finished version of his last ever film to a group of people in his inner circle. There are those of his detractors who say *Eyes Wide Shu* truly a Kubrick film because he didn't live to fully complete it. But those closest to him say movie he wanted to make, and that he died—of a heart attack, in his sleep, at his home—bec finally relaxed after finishing the final cut of this exhaustive, years-long project. His final masterpiece. At Kubrick's request, *EWS* was released on July 16th, 1999—the day he had cal having the highest viewership probability for a summer movie release. It was also thirty ye day of the Apollo 11 Moon mission launch—a funny coincidence given his celebrated outers epic *2001* features a Moon scene—and a nod to conspiracy theorists who say Kubrick secret a fake Moon landing for NASA and the CIA so that America could claim a Cold War victory i Space Race with Russia.

To honour Stanley Kubrick's contribution to science fiction cinema, the largest mountain r Pluto's moon Charon was named "Kubrick Mons", in 2018. The mountains rise out of crater to by astronomers as "Moat Mountains"—a contradiction in terms like "Eyes Wide Shut", and suitable tribute to Kubrick's enigmatic genius. *Charon* is from Greek mythology, the name ferryman from Hades who carries souls of the newly deceased across the rivers Styx and A that divide the world of the living from the world of the dead (*Dictionary of Classical Mythol*

59). The etymology of *Charon* is from Greek meaning "keen gaze" and "fierce, flashing, or feverish eyes" (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 202-203). A coin is paid to Charon as a crossing fee, li pays the cabbie who drives him to the mansion. Bill rips a $100 "bill" in two and gives half t driver, saying he'll get the other half if he waits for him. A torn bill from a torn Bill.

Eyes Wide Shut is in many ways Kubrick's most personal film. Stanley was born in New York Jewish parents, and grew up in the Bronx. His mother was an auto-didact; self-taught, like and his father was a successful medical doctor. So, Bill and Alice, a New York doctor and ho are based at least in part on Kubrick's own parents, a New York doctor and housewife. And indeed modeled the Harford home after his own Manhattan apartment prior to moving to E

EWS was coproduced by the US and UK—the two places where Kubrick primarily lived; firs York, then at about the halfway point of his life (age 35—he died at 70), he moved to England six of Kubrick's twelve official feature films were made while he lived in America, and the la while he lived in England. Fitting with *EWS* themes, it's another example of meta-duality—s York City but filmed in London; the US and UK, two of the biggest capitalist, colonial empir history.

Stanley Kubrick on the 1997-1998 set of *Eyes Wide Shut*. The movie holds the Guinness World Record for the longest continuous film shoot, at 400 days.

Other personal touches Kubrick puts in *EWS* are appearances by his two main assistants: lo production assistant and casting director Leon Vitali as Red Cloak, and personal assistant a chauffeur Emilio D'Alessandro in a cameo as a newspaper vendor. D'Alessandro's wife and c also appear as extras in the toy store. The name "Leon Vitali" is in the newspaper, and the n both men are on signs: one reads "VITALI", and another "Caffe da Emilio"—which was the na

real restaurant near Kubrick's parents' Los Angeles apartment. D'Alessandro's involvement
Kubrick is detailed in the documentary *S is for Stanley – 30 Years Behind the Wheel for Stan*
Kubrick (2016), as Vitali's is in *Filmworker* (2017). Kubrick's wife Christiane appears in *EWS* a
patron, and his daughter Katharina as the mother of Bill's patient, who is played by Kathari
son—Stanley's grandson—Alex (*Eyes Wide Shut: Stanley Kubrick and the Making of His Final*

It's been rumoured that Kubrick himself has a cameo; sitting at a table in the Sonata Café is
who looks like Stanley Kubrick did at the time (appearing at 55:55–56:07 and 56:57–57:09), bu
and hard to say for sure. The man in question glances at Bill and looks briefly at the camera
something you are never to do unless of course the script calls for it, and surely Kubrick w
notice this and never allow it from an extra? But as much as I wish it was him, I don't actua
is Kubrick here; a lookalike at best, a stand-in that Kubrick perhaps planted to give a doppe
final farewell to his audience.

Stanley Kubrick's three children—Katharina, Anya, and Vivian—were all involved in his film
especially Vivian; she had cameos in his movies, filmed the behind-the-scenes documentar
Making of The Shining, and composed the *Full Metal Jacket* score. Stanley also wanted Vivia
compose the music for *EWS*, but by the time it began production in the mid-'90s, she'd bec
increasingly entangled with Scientology and had started disconnecting from her family.
As Christiane told *The Guardian* in 2010, Stanley was unsurprisingly upset by this: "They ha
fight. He was very unhappy. He wrote her a 40-page letter trying to win her back. He begge
endlessly to come home...I'm glad he didn't live to see what happened." Katharina told the *I*
that her sister had cut off communication with the family, recounting the time Vivian show
her father's funeral accompanied by a Scientology handler: "The person sat on a bed, saying
while Vivian complained of back pain that she said had been caused 10,000 years ago."

Considering *Eyes Wide Shut* refers to Scientology in ways it would be hard to argue are flatt
the film in some respects about Stanley Kubrick himself? His relationship with his wife and
daughter Vivian, and losing her to a cult? Helena Harford, with the double initials, is quite
an embodiment of Vivian Vanessa Kubrick. It's inevitable that elements of an artist's real lif
reflected in their work, but which elements are deliberate, and which stem from the subco

Stanley Kubrick on the 1997-'98 set of *Eyes Wide Shut* with actress Marie Richardson - *Image via theasc.com (2024)*

Alice mentions having formerly managed an art gallery, but is now unemployed. Christiane is an accomplished artist, and many of her paintings—and some by her daughter Katharina previous marriage, Stanley's adopted daughter)—appear in *EWS*. Stanley met the young act Christiane Harlan not long before casting her (in a memorable role) in his *Paths of Glory*, ar remained married for forty years, until his death. The parents of Christiane and her brothe Harlan were both opera singers, in relation to *Fidelio*. And their uncle Veit Harlan was a Ge director of Nazi propaganda movies, including one of the most antisemitic films of all time *Jud Süß* ("Süss, the Jew"). Christiane Susanne Harlan was ashamed to come from "a family murderers" and so used the name "Susanne Christian" when she acted in *Paths of Glory*—bu relieved when Kubrick's Jewish family accepted her despite her Nazi ties (Christiane Kubric interview in *Haaretz*, 2005).

Stanley Kubrick was ethnically Jewish, and arguably culturally, if not religiously, and his wi descended from Nazis—so Jewishness, or omission of Jewishness, and/or antisemitism in h a topic worthy of discussion—perhaps in *Eyes Wide Shut* more than any other. 1940 saw the another Nazi propaganda film, *Die Rothschilds* ("The Rothschilds"), which negatively depicts Rothschild family during the Napoleonic wars. It features characters based on the real-life Mayer Amschel Rothschild and his son Nathan, who was father to another Mayer Amschel R who built Mentmore Towers, which serves as the Somerton mansion in *EWS*. After Bill's pa *Nathanson* dies, he goes to a mansion built by *Nathan's son*. The Rothschild family's portray corrupt Jewish banking empire is a common antisemitic trope and feature of countless rac conspiracy theories. So, was Kubrick's selection of Mentmore purely practical, because it fi envisioned for *EWS*, or is it deliberate commentary on antisemitic propaganda?

One of Kubrick's abandoned film projects was based on the life of Napoleon, which he repo researched exhaustively, so he was likely aware of the Nazi film *Die Rothschilds* and its characterization of the Rothschilds as villains in Napoleon's story. Another of Kubrick's unr projects was to be about the Holocaust, which he also tirelessly researched. Given all this, a wife's family history, antisemitism was certainly a subject Kubrick thought a lot about. Ther Jewish actor Sydney Pollack—who replaced the originally cast Harvey Keitel, also Jewish—a *EWS*'s central villain? In many ways Ziegler embodies racist "sinister Jew" stereotypes; deca vulgar, duplicitous, and ultrawealthy. There are very few explicit Jewish references in *EWS*, notably visible is "Josef Kreibich's Knishery" outside Domino's apartment. Is this perhaps ba real knishery Kubrick recalled from his youth in New York City? And why include it in his meticulously designed set, when he had ordered co-screenwriter Frederic Raphael to erase references from their screenplay adaptation of Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*?

Arthur Schnitzler was Jewish, as are *Traumnovelle*'s couple whom Bill and Alice are based o there's a subtext of antisemitism in the novella. But Kubrick wanted this out of the movie. (In connection with the *EWS* character Lou Nathanson; there was another Rothschild family named Louis Nathaniel de Rothschild who was Austrian, like Schnitzler, lived in Vienna in t the novella was set (1920s), and owned a large and exquisite art collection. He was arrested Nazis in 1938 and was only released after negotiating a multimillion dollar bail payment. He the Holocaust, but the Rothschild possessions were plundered and subsequently "Aryanised including many valuable art works. Aryanization was the Nazi practice of seizing Jewish pro transferring it into non-Jewish hands—kind of like what Kubrick did in *EWS* with the

Anglicization/Americanization of *Traumnovelle*'s European Jewish characters. Adolf *Ziegler* Nazi official in charge of confiscating "degenerate art", and in *EWS* it's mentioned that Victo has a great art collection in his private gallery.

These *could* all be clues to Kubrick's consciously orchestrated—albeit subtle and enigmatic commentary on antisemitic conspiracy theories, or it could be purely coincidental. But is it coincidence that a Kubrick actress, Marisa Berenson, attended a Rothschild masquerade ba bears significant parallels to the masked ball at a Rothschild mansion in *EWS*? This party w the "Surrealist Ball", Surrealism was among the art movements that Nazis deemed degenera several Surrealist paintings are visible in *EWS*. So what's Kubrick trying to say with all this?

It seems he's indicting patriarchical, hierarchical power structures of all cultures, and the ultrawealthy class of any race or religion. Besides Ziegler, other villainous characters inclu Hungarian Szavost, the Slavic Milich (the actor is Croatian), his two Japanese associates, an English-accented Red Cloak. *EWS* refers to the (American) Rockefeller family and the (Briti Family of Windsor, and less subtly than the Rothschild family, as both the names "Rockefell "Windsor" are spoken in the film, while "Rothschild" is not. If the story is a series of projecti Bill's unconscious mind, then he is perhaps unconscious of his own antisemitic worldview, unconscious of his wife's and his own sexual fantasies, and of his desire to be ultrawealthy. Kubrick is in fact satirizing conspiracism, emphasizing that antisemitism, racism, classism any form of discrimination—results from ignorance, insecurity, and unacknowledged fears *Eyes Wide Shut* is not just a movie that has generated countless conspiracy theories, but is a *about* conspiracy theories.

Cruise, Kidman, & Kubrick, on set during the last scene of *Eyes Wide Shut* - *Image via* ***scrapsfromtheloft.com*** *(2019)*

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TOYS IN A TOYSHOP: PLAYTHINGS OF THE WEALTHY ELITE

Eyes Wide Shut touches on a variety of sexual manifestations: heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality, group sex, marital sex, adultery, voyeurism, prostitution, pedophilia, necro equally persistent are themes surrounding class, capitalism, wealth, and power. Just as the of dialogue ("Honey, have you seen my wallet?") is a direct supposition of the association be and class, so is the final scene. It occurs, of all places, in a shopping center, where Bill and discussing the future of their relationship following his confession of all that's happened in previous couple days. They've taken their young daughter Helena shopping for Christmas g toy store. She runs around excitedly examining different items, already an enthusiastic cor herself.

In this setting the Harfords are surrounded by a kind of decadence perhaps just as pornogr any of the film's sexual depictions; racks and shelves bursting with toys, dolls, and teddy b mass-produced for consumption by the greedy people buzzing eagerly about. The scene is with pagan, occult, and mythical imagery, with objects that have appeared elsewhere in the stars, wreaths, Christmas trees, and so on. Objects that appear onscreen throughout the m visual symbols summarized at the end as products for sale, as if much of what we see existi outside of the characters' physical beings may actually be reflections of their interior psych landscapes.

Many toyshop items appear earlier in the film. The same stuffed toy tiger on Domino's bed multiple on a rack behind Alice. The antique baby buggy that Helena plays with recalls a str Domino's apartment building. "Carlotta Junior" boxes are visible with a picture of a girl doll mini baby carriage, mirroring Helena with the baby carriage in the same scene. A stack of b games called "Magic Circle" refers to a protective circle used in ritual magic and like the on at the orgy ceremony, and also evokes fairy rings. At the film's opening, Helena mentions *T Nutcracker* while dressed in a tutu and fairy wings, and in the store she looks at a *Nutcrack* Sugar Plum Fairy Barbie doll that's wearing a similar costume—which also resembles the ar ornament atop the Harfords' Christmas tree, and recalls Cupid, Sabrina, and Giselle.

Alice & Bill in the toyshop scene; objects in the store reflect things that appear earlier in *Eyes Wide Shut*, like the "Magic Circle" game.

Helena holds up the Barbie doll, happily exclaiming, "Look, Mommy!" Like her parents, she bought into the corporate lie, the ignorant acceptance of themselves as little more than exp playthings of the rich. This fabrication is perpetrated by corrupt superpowers whose only i to continually undermine the personal self-image of people who are not of their class, for t use, by any and all means—including manipulation, murder, and selling manufactured repr of plastic women in shiny boxes. Alice responds with a meek smile, seemingly resigned to h materialism. Superficially, her reaction is due to exhaustion from staying up all night in lig confession, and she's distracted by their current conversation. But on a deeper level Alice i exhausted by the misogyny perpetuated throughout society, including by herself and Bill; a stand in a toy store, realizing for the first time that they themselves are toys...or maybe stil realizing it, depending on one's interpretation.

The inclusion of the Magic Circle game applies as a kind of description of Bill's journey, lik through the concentric circles of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*. "The Magic Circle" is also the infor of the five most prestigious London-based multinational corporate law firms—lawyers of t ultrawealthy elite. And in gaming and digital media, "the magic circle" describes the space t surrounds a virtual or synthetic world; a kind of shield between the fantasy world of a gam outside world in which the gamer lives. The term "magic circle" in this context was inspired cultural theorist Johan Huizinga in his 1938 work *A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, in w included the stage and the screen as arenas equivalent to other gaming platforms—whethe tables or tennis courts—where temporary worlds are created within the real-life, ordinary dedicated to the performance of an act.

Helena with a doll baby carriage in the toyshop

"Carlotta Junior" boxes (left) bear a picture of a girl doll with a toy baby carriage

In the toy store Alice wears black shoes, black pants, and a black turtleneck sweater under overcoat—an identical outfit to what the bald man stalking Bill wears. Alice has her hands i coat's front pockets, just as the stalker does, implying he actually represents her. As if Alice one following Bill, in his own guilty, paranoid mind. When Bill revisits the costume store he two Japanese businessmen from the night before; one wears a long *black* overcoat like Bill, other wears a long *tan* overcoat like Alice and the stalker.

The immediate cut to the toyshop scene is a medium shot of Helena walking towards the ca wearing a black hat and long black coat, as a woman wearing an identical—albeit of course sized—black hat and black coat crosses past Helena with her back to us. We then see a man overcoat with a red shirt underneath, just like Bill is wearing. Then a second woman wearin Helena's same black hat and coat walks by, past the Magic Circle boxes, as does another ma Bill's same black coat and Alice's black turtleneck. And then a *third* man wearing Bill's coat this guy has the collar popped like Bill did during his night walks, and bumps into Bill as he him in the bustling store. Bill turns to look at the man as he walks by. Following behind this collar guy is yet a *fourth* Bill-in-black-overcoat replica, and as he passes we see a man in th background wearing a long tan overcoat and black turtleneck like Alice. And then a third He black-hat-and-coat woman walks by. Doppelgängers everywhere; and always they're movin opposite direction than the Harfords are—away from the camera so we can't see their faces of copies. Multiple universes intertwining. Endless reproductions, like the teddy bears, the figurines surrounding.

Kubrick films have a pattern of featuring objects that falsify human body parts in some way mannequins, dolls, costumes—synthetic, artificial people. In *A Clockwork Orange*: eyeball c nude women body-tables, a penis sculpture, masks that Alex and his cohorts wear, and his done up with doll-like false eyelashes. *Killer's Kiss* has a memorable climactic fight scene in mannequin warehouse, where two characters hurl plaster body parts at each other. In *The* thieves wear clown masks during a robbery. *Barry Lyndon* extensively employs elaborate co and wigs. Masks hang on the hotel walls in *The Shining*. *2001* features HAL, an *artificial inte* And *Eyes Wide Shut* has the masks, cloaks, mannequins, and the dolls in the toyshop.

The Kubrick-developed, Spielberg-directed film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* also involves the person" theme, with a Pinnochio-like story about an android child who wants to be human.

adapted from Brian Aldiss's short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long", Kubrick spent ye developing the concept and story outline after buying the rights in the early 1970s. At one t intending it to be his next movie after *EWS*, Kubrick had envisioned *A.I.* to be the most spe special effects film ever made. It was rumoured he'd been waiting for technology to progres stage that he could construct an actual robot to play the lead part of the android boy. But h ultimately concluded he'd be too old by the time this was the case, and in 1995 handed the p Steven Spielberg to complete as he saw fit. The sequel to the original story, also by Aldiss, i "Supertoys When Winter Comes".

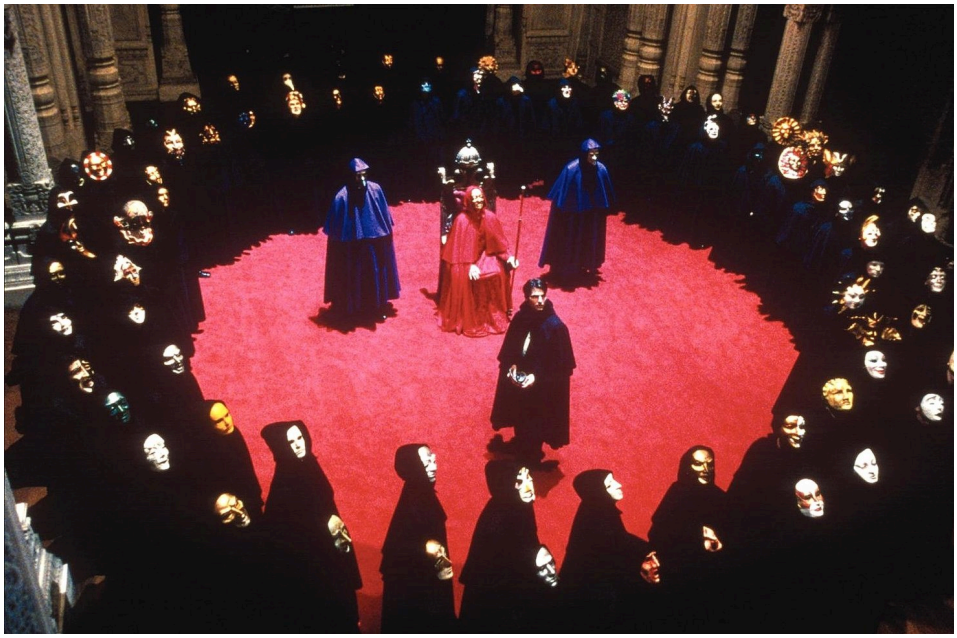
Helena holds up a fairy princess Barbie Doll, recalling the fairy wings she wears at the beginnin of the movie.

We first see Helena wearing a fairy princess costume, and she asks her parents if she can s watch *The Nutcracker*—an 1892 ballet with a fantasy narrative about toys that come to life, a includes the character "Sugar Plum Fairy". This links to Kubrick's second wife Ruth Sobotka ballerina and actress who had starred in a production of *The Nutcracker*, and also as the ch *Charlotta* in a Chekhov play, which links back to the *Carlotta* doll. Considered a Christmas *The Nutcracker* has been adapted numerous times throughout various media—as has the 19 operetta *Babes in Toyland*, by the same guys who first adapted *The Wizard of Oz* book into a musical.

A fairy tale involving nursery rhyme characters and Christmas themes, the original stage v *Babes in Toyland* involves some rather dark plot elements. A pair of orphan siblings escape killed by their wicked uncle and end up in the magical fantasy world of Toyland where they encounter the *Master Toymaker*, an evil genius who creates toys that kill. But the demon toy the toymaker and kill *him*. And there are more deaths. But also lots of dolls and marionette the years, subsequent stage and screen versions of *Babes in Toyland* toned down the darker dialed up the family-friendly Christmas elements, and the Master Toymaker evolved into a man. It includes the songs "Toyland" and "Go to Sleep, Slumber Deep", and the characters *C Mary*, *Tom Tom*, *The Spirit of the Pine*, and yes, *The Master Toymaker*—who "designs all the t world". The ending scene of *Eyes Wide Shut* was filmed at London's centuries-old toyshop *H* which rhymes with *Stanley's*, as if he is the toymaker, the puppetmaster pulling all the strin

Mary...Tom Tom...Spirit...Pine; Marie/Marion, double "Toms", spirits—remember *EWS* was fi
London's *Pine*wood Studios (Christmas Trees)?

The final toyshop scene—at Christmastime—ties together images that appear throughout *E*
Shut by way of the Kubrickian motif of synthetic beings. As if everything in the movie is a t
everyone a doll, a dummy playing a role, a piece in a game, inside a snow globe, a product s
store—like the movie itself, a story about stories, from the world of Wonderland, a fairy tal
soon to a theatre near you.



The circle in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

BACK
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A HAPPY ENDING?

In a *Saturday Review* interview published on Christmas day, 1971, Kubrick said, "I have alwa
dealing with a slightly surrealistic situation and presenting it in a realistic manner. I've alw
fairy tales and myths, magical stories, supernatural stories, ghost stories, surrealistic and
stories" ("Kubrick Country", with Penelope Houston). This interest of Kubrick's is evident in
Shut perhaps more than any of his other films, with its multitude of mythical allusions.

Modern-day, Disney-like versions of fairy tales usually have happy endings..."and they lived
ever after". But many of these stories originate from macabre ancient tales. In context of Bi
psychosexual issues, the very phrase "happy ending" has certain connotations; a slang term
prostitute bringing a male client to climax following a massage in a "massage parlour". The
EWS evokes this, and Bill's sexual frustration; just as he goes through the story without eve
having sex, many thought the ending overly ambiguous and inconclusive. Some, like Martin
saw it as an uplifting conclusion, a story about a husband and wife growing closer through

intimacy. And others thought it a cynical, even tragic tale of characters who begin with thei
wide shut" and end with their eyes still closed, having learned nothing.

The final dialogue exchange between Bill and Alice:

BILL: No dream is ever just a dream.

ALICE: The important thing is that we're awake now, and hopefully for a long time to

BILL: Forever.

ALICE: Forever?

BILL: Forever.

ALICE: Let's not use that word. It frightens me.

This resonates as a sort of mockery of the and-they-lived-happily-ever-after cliché. And th
Wide Shut ends, with one of the best last movie lines of all time:

ALICE: And you know, there is something very important that we need to do as soon
possible.

BILL: What's that?

ALICE: Fuck.

Kubrick's last word.

Returning to the article ***Introducing Sociology***, Tim Kreider describes *EWS* as a savage critiq
yuppie marriage, stating that Alice and Bill "casually pimp their own little angel out to the v
commerce" with an ending intimating that "the Harfords' daughter is, just as they've resign
themselves to being, fucked." So, while fitting the prescription of a slipstream dream story,
might also appropriately be characterized as satire—a sardonic look at an upper-middle cl
couple's misguided attempts to become members of the freakish ruling class. However, yea
his initial review, Kreider added an afterword describing *EWS* as espousing a more positive
perspective of humanity than he first thought: "a film about intimate, domestic life, about a
complacent but basically happy marriage, testing its fault lines of temptation, jealousy and
resentment and leaving it stronger and more truthful."

The two men who sit below the *Cupid & Psyche* statue at Ziegler's appear again in the toyshop at
the end of *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

One particular detail in the ending has emerged as the focus of extensive debate. Two men Ziegler's party—sitting at a table below a Cupid and Psyche statue, by the staircase that Bill with Ziegler's butler—are seen again in the toyshop. We never see them very clearly or for v in either scene, but it appears to be the same guys. They wear black suits, one wears glasse bald, with grey hair—Rich Old White Men. They're inconspicuously browsing behind where Alice are talking, when Helena seemingly follows them behind a rack. It happens very quick the hustle-bustle of the store, but it looks like the same two men from Ziegler's are leading away.

Helena disappears right after Bill and Alice pat her on the back, as if encouraging her to fol men. She looks up at her father, and he and Alice both nonchalantly rub her back in mid-conversation and look down at her. Then she walks towards the two men, Bill looks back at Alice turns her head towards Helena as if for "one last look" at her. Helena looks questioning Alice, then follows the men. It's as if Helena is checking in with her parents, asking them, "A sure I should go this way?" And Bill and Alice say, "Yes, honey, go with those capitalist men. Capitalism *is* the best way." And they watch her go. But it cuts back to face close-ups of Bill before we see if Helena actually follows the men all the way around the corner, leaving her ambiguous. At this moment, a shelf full of stuffed tiger dolls lines the right side of the scre Alice—the same tiger stuffy seen earlier on Domino's bed. The tiger/leopard print pattern h remained popular in female fashion for decades, sexualizing women as exotic wild creature

Are Bill and Alice so blind to the horrific sex abuse powers of the rich that they don't notice daughter's abduction? Or they *willingly* sell her to the cult, linking to the *Rosemary's Baby* th sacrificing one's child, to secure entry. They seem oblivious or surrendered or even suppor Helena going with the men—the same two seen at Ziegler's? Henchmen of the ultrawealthy the implications of this in relation to systemic pedophilia in the Catholic Church, conspira theories of wealthy elites running child-trafficking sex rings, satanic ritual sacrifice, etc.? I say, a very dark and unsettling ending. After all they've just experienced, Bill and Alice give child to the upper-echelon sex cult to buy their way in, and just want to "fuck". Is this a horr A brazen condemnation of capitalism? A scathing satire of the immorality of the ultrarich?

Bill and Alice pat their daughter Helena on the back...

...and watch her follow two men who were a Ziegler's party.

I'm struggling with this idea, but it does apply to what was happening with Kubrick and his Vivian at the time *EWS* was going into production; she'd become estranged from the family by Scientology. Perhaps Kubrick is saying that he and his wife, like Bill and Alice, were so preoccupied with their own lives that they barely noticed their daughter being led dangero astray, or surrendered to their own powerlessness in preventing it.

If the names Helena, Sabrina, and Carlotta are intentional references, what does it mean? I comment "I can put Sabrina in here" refers to putting *Comus*'s Sabrina into the *Rosemary's E* buggy, is Helena recognizing herself and her parents as inevitable victims of rich powerful effect saying, "I can sacrifice the female spirit who protects feminine virtue from abuse by p men by putting her into this demon carriage—and by doing so I will gain access to, buy mys an elite status." And she does it unconsciously, repeating the patterns of cultural energy tha around her, the demons that infect her; the Barbie dolls, the tiger stuffies, the Disney fairy Savior Prince. Bill and Alice teach her these things because it's what they were taught. Alice Beautiful Bored Housewife with the Rich Doctor Husband, who flirts with creepy older men parties. Bill with his Old Boys' Club desires, the scotch, the hookers, his ol' college buddy. T trying to live out some version of themselves that advertisers made up to sell stuff. They th are the toys in the toyshop. It's a dark examination of the worst side of human nature, and Capitalist Manifesto.

But on the other hand, little to nothing we see happen in this movie is *real*. With this in min toward the interpretation that it's a genuine happy ending—to an alternately ironic and sat sincere and dramatic, adult Christmas Movie. An unlikely fairy tale. Bill and Alice pat Helen back as if to tell her that everything's okay, that those two men don't really exist except in t minds, that Helena is safe, because they now know evil is an illusion that only exists within themselves, which they are now facing up to and so it no longer holds power over them.

There's no film credit for the actors who play the two mysterious men...no evidence, not a t ever existed. They sat by a winged statue, and Helena wore fairy wings. Are they all spirits? the two men aren't sinister agents at all, but rather kindly guardian angels in the vein of *It's Wonderful Life*? The story of an angel, at Christmastime, helping a man appreciate his life b him a dark alternate reality. Maybe the doubled old guys are like Clarence the Angel from *I Wonderful Life*, or The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future from *A Christmas Car* Helena's turn to be shown the mirror realities, the possible alternate timeline versions of h Illona, Domino, or Milich's daughter, to forewarn her so that she might avoid the fate of su to misogyny and "wake up" as her parents finally have. Maybe the twin old guys are there to over Helena at the end, as they were there to watch over Bill and Alice at Ziegler's party to r neither of them actually cheated—and Bill and Alice now realize the secret society isn't real longer a danger to them.

Helena at the beginning of the movie, wearing a fairy costume and asking if she can stay up to watch *The Nutcracker*.

And there's Alice's dream—a dream within a dream? And *Through the Looking-Glass*, and *Th of Oz*..."the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true". There's a lot that implies n events are not actually happening as we're shown, but are largely figments of Bill's imagina Projections from the unconscious...the Freudian id, the Jungian shadow. But when do the d segments start and end? There is no clear delineation between fantasy and reality in *EWS*, partly why it's so puzzling.

As far as we know, the Harfords are all okay in the end, no? Better off than when they starte just a toy baby buggy. It's just a doll. A dream. Bill and Alice share a kind of intimacy that th in years, if ever. They tell the truth to each other. Neither of them actually cheated. They're and rich. The threat is over, if even there ever really was one. Maybe the twin old men repr good *and* bad qualities of patriarchy; how men can concurrently care for and oppress wom embodying the worst evil of corruption and abuse *and* the protective, comforting strength or husbandly guidance. How can we be sure about the ending, and what is "real" or not? We sure, and this is why Kubrick films are both exasperating and enlightening, but ultimately transformative; he made works of art that challenge us to penetrate the deepest recesses o hearts and minds to draw out meaningful reflections about life.

Some Kubrick scholars assert that the recurrence of the two men is simply an instance of r crowd extras to reduce production costs, and their double appearance has no narrative im But these same scholars also emphasize Kubrick's painstaking attention to detail, stating th nothing in a Kubrick film is there by chance, the composition of every frame filled with me how do we reconcile this? After all, there's the Cupid greeting card and the *Eros* sign, the tv near a winged Cupid statue, Helena wears fairy wings, and the three of them appear togeth end. If we accept all this as mere oversight on Kubrick's part, then what other symbolic, metaphorical elements should we regard as being in the film for purely economical reason then Kubrick was *not* the thorough, calculating filmmaker that everyone says. Or he *used to* *EWS* he was old, tired, and sloppy. But no one wants to admit this and would rather uphold

of individuals throughout history as geniuses, as if such people reflect the greatest potentia humankind and somehow give us hope in a dark world. So, we look for meaning.

Eyes Wide Shut begins with the image of Alice's naked body—objectified—and ends with the image of her face—humanized.

The movie begins and ends with Alice. Although Bill is the protagonist, Alice is the catalyst voyage to self-discovery and awareness, signalling an unstable masculinity and ascent of fe within a male-dominated society. The film's opening shot is Alice naked, undressing, with l to the camera in a medium-shot—objectified. And the closing shot is a close-up of her face eyed, with a blank expression, no makeup, and wearing glasses—humanized. This epitomiz journey—and ours as the audience—moving from viewing Woman as an object to viewing H person. It's progress.

Bill starts out in denial, naïve about his wife's sexual desires, and his own. But as Alice says they're "awake" they can finally, in a more intimate way than ever before, "fuck". That is, acknowledging fantasies can allow for more meaningful connection with sexual partners ir rather than remaining fantasy which only briefly, superficially fulfills, if at all—or can be da and destructive if pursued blindly. The quest for wealth is a terrible lie manifested from ou unacknowledged insecurities. But to explore one's dark side, the *shadow*, through the mirro spouse, and as such face oneself, can result in overcoming fear and temptation to live more and fully. So, maybe it *is* a hopeful ending, saying that evil is an illusion. That seeking mate and power over others is what is evil, and recognizing this liberates us from the demon spi dancing around, inside and outside of us. Is there a difference between what's inside and o us?

Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's science fiction epic *Solaris* (1972), adapted from Stan Lem's 1961 novel, has often been compared to Kubrick's *2001*. But it also draws connections The story is set in a space station orbiting Solaris, a planet covered entirely by ocean, whicl scientists believe is an intelligent, sentient being. One day the cosmonaut protagonist finds who has been dead for ten years, alive in his quarters. She's not a hallucination, but rather embodiment of his memory of her; as if Solaris has probed his consciousness and confront with a physical replica of his most deeply embedded psychic imprint, in an attempt at communication. Just as *Eyes Wide Shut* shows Bill facing characters from his dream consci

Solaris explores the idea that everyone a person encounters is a reflection of their Self. An
I know claims each painting she models for looks like an amalgamation of her and the artis
themself.

Eyes Wide Shut is really all about perception. Kubrick is talking about conquering the bigge
wielded by the ruling class—fear. The things you fear most don't actually exist—*unless* you f
This is the paradox in the title, describing the movie's thesis; it can't be explained in words
know, Kubrick understood a movie as an experience that "directly penetrates the subconsc
an emotional and philosophic content". *EWS* is a Dream Movie. An old-fashioned Fairy Tale
alternative Christmas Movie. A satirical Love Story. And with its displays of sexual abuses c
and capitalist decadence, it's simultaneously a kind of horror and *anti*horror film—in the s
there actually is a lot to fear, but only if you fear it. Only if you seek it—that is, only if you e
darkness unknowingly, in denial, blind. There's nothing to be scared of, except yourself. Th
comforting and frightening. Like that saying "We don't see things as they are, we see things
Or that other one, "We see what we want to see."

Eyes Wide Shut (1999)

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CONCLUSION: THEATRE OF THE MYTHIC

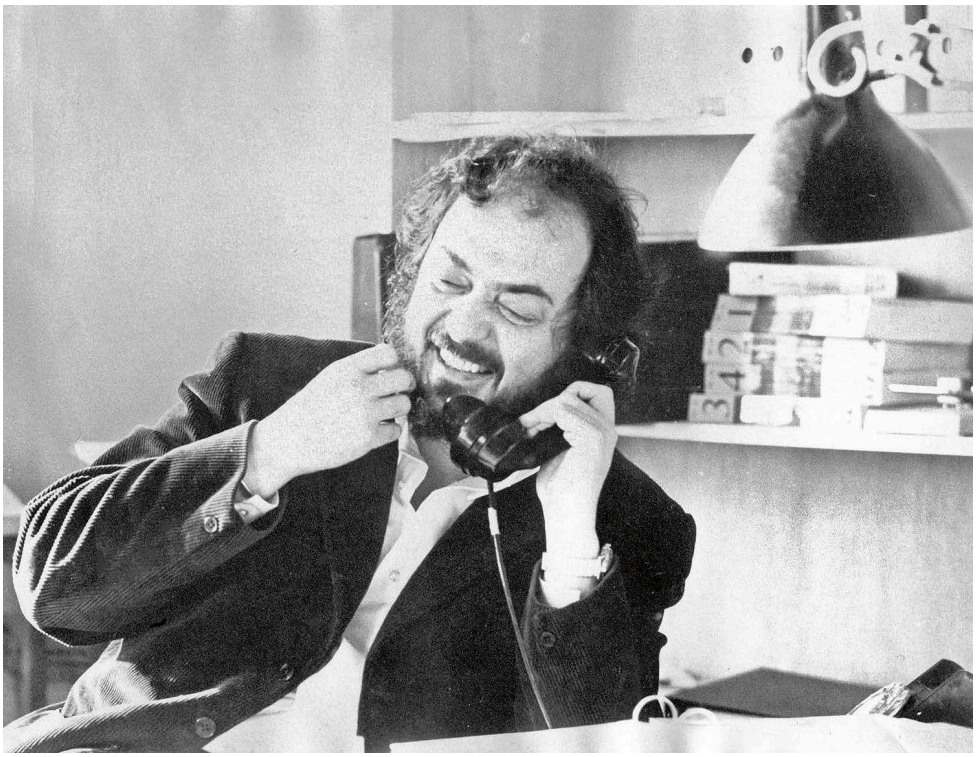
Kubrick wanted to make a film about sex since the early 1960s. Biographer John Baxter says
had an interest in directing a pornographic film based on *Blue Movie*—a satirical novel by *L*
Strangelove co-screenwriter Terry Southern—about a director who makes Hollywood's first
budget studio porn film. But while Kubrick liked the idea, he concluded he didn't have the
temperament to research the pornography industry, and Southern described him as "too u
conservative" to have gone ahead with it (*Stanley Kubrick: A Biography*, 195, 248). Kubrick's v

a wide range of genres; science fiction, crime film, historical epic, horror, comedy, politica and war film. It was even rumoured that at one time he conceived *A.I.* as a kids' movie. So a filmmaker interested in all aspects of the medium, the idea of Kubrick wanting to make a b porn film under studio conditions makes sense. And *EWS* might be just that—but more so a pornographic films, as Cruise's character repeatedly faces sexual propositions in increasin illogical contexts, as in porn, but without actually having sex.

Every Kubrick film features at least one killing, and sexual abuse of women/girls is promin several. As such, he's been accused of glorifying violence and misogyny. He was into explor dark hollows of humankind—often with a cynical tone—but for positive intellectual stimula reflection, *not* out of some kind of sadistic revelry as his disparagers claim. Satire requires exaggeration of lies to emphasize the truth. What Kubrick detractors miss is that he was an contrast to an *entertainer*—who investigated existential extremes so that we may all learn s about ourselves. It might not be something we want to face, but there it is. As I see it, *Eyes* espouses a thoroughly feminist, anticapitalist ideology in exposing the abuse of women as linked to the abuse of economic wealth.

In addition to being celebrated as a brilliant artist, Kubrick was an innovative promoter of His attention to detail and obsessive work ethic is solidified as cinema legend, and this ext all aspects of his films including advertising. Kubrick devised formulas whereby he could g to major studio funders that his pictures would make money. His marketing scheme involv approving the posters to be produced and locations where they were to be displayed, and mathematical equations about the number and location of theatres his movies were to be s And so Kubrick flicks always made a profit despite usually unfavourable early reviews—onl up years later on many favourite films lists.

A tireless researcher, Kubrick's holistic oversight of all aspects of his movies has rarely, if e matched by any filmmaker in history. He took all the time he wanted on any given project, with his last few films. Kubrick secured the rights to *Traumnovelle* in 1968, but his friends a collaborators have said he read the novella about fifteen years prior to that—which means h thinking about the film and working on it in some capacity for nearly fifty years. As such, it richest, most deeply layered work. Kubrick spent decades developing the *Eyes Wide Shut* sc and approximately five years on pre- through post-production; it holds the Guinness Worl for the longest continuous film shoot, at 400 days. While many directors might do twenty-s takes of a scene at most before they feel they've gotten it right, Kubrick would sometimes d hundred. It's a practice that notoriously drove his actors crazy. But because of this his film strange plain of discovery, operating on a nonliteral frequency.



Stanley Kubrick at his England home in the 1970s (photographer unknown)

Eyes Wide Shut, like most Kubrick films, necessitates repeated viewings. And what results is complex and interpretive that it's like a different movie every time you see it. In some respe Kreider's initial conclusion of Bill and Alice and their daughter being "fucked" by the ruling superpowers who control them and all aspects of life seems insightful and accurate—maki thoroughly cynical ending. They're total slaves to the wealthy elite, playthings that, while th aspire to be owners, will always be midlevel servants, trapped in the image of themselves a other that's sold to them, about their sexuality, through the system of capitalism.

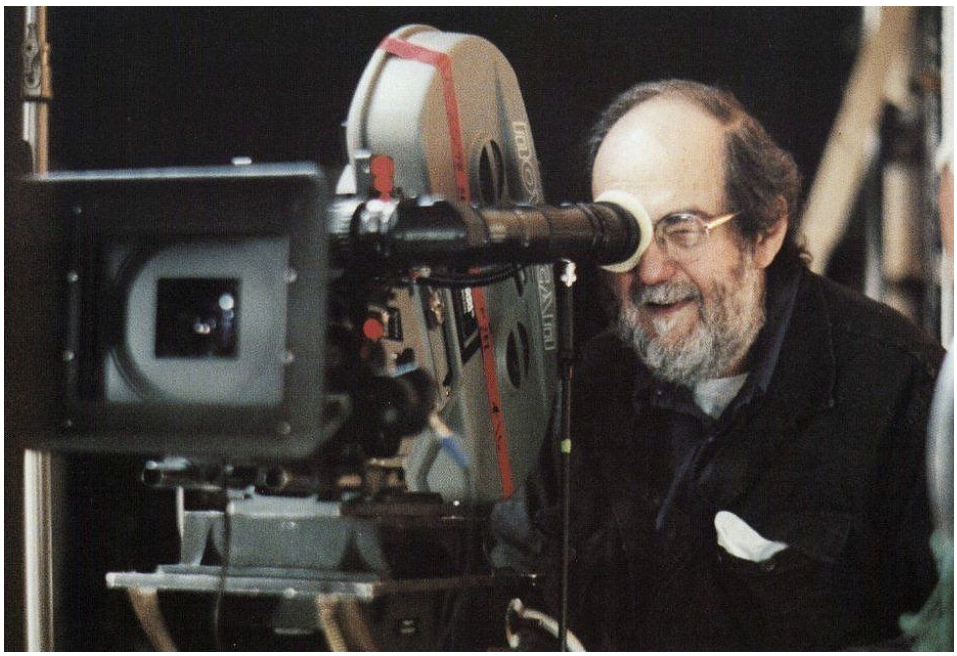
But recurrent viewings unveil an ultimately positive and uplifting message overall. While it true that the characters have been unwittingly manipulated by the ultrawealthy, treated as and sexual objects—despite all the psychological, political, biological influences—a couple work it out. Even with the dangerous emotions the characters face throughout the story, ar dark path that Bill in particular embarks on, he is ultimately honest with his wife in the end by *her* being honest with *him*. Through open emotional expression, together they overcome scariest, most powerful forces of evil lying within the darkness of humankind, and within themselves. Maybe that's what marriage, intimacy, and love is really about.

As Alice says at the end, "We're awake now". And so while they may be metaphorically "fucke man and woman living within the capitalist system, they can still metaphorically *un*fuck th by, literally, fucking—in a deeper and truer way than ever before. And so *Eyes Wide Shut* en paradoxes of humanity in its multilayered visual and narrative fabric, in context of one of t challenging yet essential aspects of human existence—relationships. We're all characters in other's dream consciousnesses; "It's not you, it's *me*."

What is real, and what is a dream? *Eyes Wide Shut*. The title really is the thesis, a descriptio film and us, the audience; we're watching, but not *seeing*. We're seeing with our eyes, but w understanding. Or—because so much of Kubrick's visual detail registers subliminally—we'r

but not with our eyes. It's like that old joke: "'I see,' said the blind man. 'I hear ya,' said the d
And the mute man said nothing at all." Just kidding. But seriously though. That's why this m
insane. It's like a Möbius strip, an M.C. Escher picture, a Rube Goldberg machine. A fractal
puzzle of infinite, interconnected, intertextual dimensions. Stanley Kubrick's best movies a
labyrinthine maps plotting human absurdity, exploring the boundaries of existence; war, vi
sex, time, space. You know, the small stuff.

Eyes Wide Shut is a film of vast scope and depth, unrelenting in its exploration of the effect
human evolution, history, politics, and art have on dreams, perception, sex, and relationsh
Kubrick presents us with the theatre of the mythic, where fabulist inventions reflect our ov
potential. Penetrating our psyches through the art of illusion, ancient artifacts are brought
the mundanity of the present. Kubrick made works of art to be dissected and discussed, no
crowd-pleasing entertainment to be simply consumed and agreed upon. As such, *Eyes Wid*
endures, as Stanley Kubrick himself proclaimed before his death upon completion of the fi
greatest work.



Stanley Kubrick on the set of his last movie, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

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